













RIGHT HON THE MARQUIS OF SALISBURY, K. G.

Thomas Clark, London & Edinburgh.

THE  
LIFE AND SPEECHES  
OF  
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE  
JOHN BRIGHT, M.P.

BY  
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AUTHOR OF "THE LIFE OF THE RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P."

*WITH GALLERY OF PORTRAITS OF HIS CONTEMPORARIES  
ETCHED BY CHARLES LAURIE.*

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Stinton on the ground of Mr. Bright's peace principles. Some discussion ensued, and the meeting was adjourned until the evening. Mr. Ald. Hodgson presided also at the second meeting. Mr. J. S. Wright now nominated Mr. Bright, and his observations evoked much enthusiasm. He stated that Lord John Russell had paused in the middle of a great speech in the House of Commons, to utter his profound regret that Mr. John Bright was not in the House of Commons, so that his trenchant mind might enlighten them by its counsels. Upon Reform questions, Mr. Bright was eminently fitted to be their representative. He would extend the suffrage, and give a strong and an enlightened support to the principles of civil and religious liberty. Mr. Bright was also much wanted in the House at the existing crisis in Indian affairs; and if there was any man fully capable of contributing to the real glory of the British people, and who was desirous of developing the resources and energies of the Indian empire, and of raising the sleeping capacities of the Hindoo, that man was Mr. Bright. Mr. Alderman Manton seconded the proposition. The names of one or two other gentleman were mentioned at the meeting as probable candidates, and it was finally arranged that the matter should be settled at a great public meeting to be called for the 4th of August.

On that evening the Town Hall was crowded with an audience numbering five or six thousand persons. Mr. W. Lucy occupied the chair. Mr. Bright was proposed for the vacant seat by Mr. George Edmonds, and seconded by Mr. Alderman Manton. Mr. T. A. Attwood proposed, and Mr. J. Goodman seconded, the nomination of Mr. Baron Webster as a candidate. Mr. M. A. Dalzell, while acknowledging the high character and abilities of Mr. Bright, said that the man who had for fourteen years fought the battle of democracy in Birmingham, and almost single-handed, was Mr. George Dawson. He had youth on his side, brilliant talents, and everything requisite to make a senator. Mr. Dawson, however, came forward and said he was unable to stand as a candidate. He expressed his conviction that Mr. Bright was the only man on whom there was any chance of their agreeing. Although he differed from Mr. Bright on the subject of the Russian war, and on some other questions,

these differences would not incline him to prefer a mere respectable Birmingham man, untried in politics, and who had done little service, to a man who was foremost in the House of Commons, and who was one of the most straightforward and honest of Englishmen. This generous tribute to Mr. Bright, coming from one who had himself been asked to come forward as a candidate, elicited loud applause. Mr. Dawson added that he had a peculiar reason for liking Mr. Bright—he believed him to be a right honest and able enemy of Lord Palmerston. He considered that Lord Palmerston's rule in this country was disastrous and disgraceful, and there was not a man in England who could meet him like John Bright.

When the show of hands was taken, scarcely a hundred hands were held up for Mr. Webster, while six thousand persons held up their hands for Mr. Bright, who thus became the Liberal candidate. The committee for securing his election issued an address describing the services and principles of 'the people's candidate.' A Mr. M'Geachy came forward in the Conservative interest, but his candidature, like that of Mr. Webster, was not regarded as serious.

Mr. Bright consented to come forward, and at once issued his address. At that time the terrible Indian Mutiny was the all-absorbing question occupying public attention, and on this subject Mr. Bright said: 'Whilst I deplore this terrible event, along with the rest of my countrymen, I am perhaps less surprised at it than most of them are. For twelve years I have given great attention to the subject of India. I have twice brought it before Parliament, once in moving for a select committee, and once in moving for a royal commission of inquiry; and I took an active part in the debates on the bill recently passed to continue the powers of the East India Company, and attended public meetings in several of our large cities with a view to excite public interest in the great question of the government of India. The success of the insurrection would involve anarchy in India, unless some great man, emerging from the chaos, should build up a new empire, based on and defended by military power. I am not prepared to defend the steps by which England has obtained dominion in the East; but looking to the interests of India and of England, I cannot oppose such measures as

may be deemed necessary to suppress the existing disorder. To restore order to India is a mercy to India ; but heavy will be the guilt of our countrymen should we neglect hereafter any measure which would contribute to the welfare of its hundred millions of population. I hope the acts of the Government will be free from the vindictive and sanguinary spirit which is shown in many of the letters which appear in the newspapers ; and that when the present crisis is over, all that exists of statesmanship in England will combine to work what good is possible out of so much evil.' But while Mr. Bright thus supported the Government in suppressing the Mutiny, he subsequently expressed his deep indignation at the severities and cruelties practised by the British troops and their commanders on the natives of India.

The nomination for Birmingham was held in the Town Hall on the 10th of August. In consequence of the state of his health, Mr. Bright was unable to be present at the proceedings. The Mayor, Mr. (afterwards Sir) John Ratcliff, presided. Alderman Lloyd nominated Mr. Bright, and Mr. George Edmonds seconded the nomination. The latter gentleman prophesied that that day's meeting would be hereafter referred to as forming an epoch in the Parliamentary history of the Midland metropolis. The other candidates having withdrawn, Mr. Bright was declared duly elected.

Mr. Duncan M'Laren, Mr. Bright's brother-in-law, now stepped forward to thank the electors for the great honour they had conferred upon his distinguished relative. Mr. Bright's illness, he said, was the result of an overwrought brain, and his medical advisers had laid upon him strict injunctions not only to abstain from speaking, but even to abstain from appearing at public meetings, where exciting circumstances might be the means of bringing back that disease which a merciful Providence had now removed. He had been strongly pressed to give his brain two years' repose. Eighteen months of that abstinence from public life had already elapsed, and the two years would have expired ere Mr. Bright was called on to take his seat in Parliament. In Mr. Bright's address, continued Mr. M'Laren, they had the spontaneous expression of his opinions, for he was not the man to trim his sails to catch the passing breeze.

He did not come forward with any apology, with any retraction, with any expression of regret, with any promise of amendment ; but he said that, as he had been an advocate of his country's interests, a defender of the rights of the working classes, the supporter of good legislation of every kind, so would he continue to be, and maintain those views which he believed to be right, whether they were in unison with or against popular opinion. The speaker went on to say that the people of Birmingham had come forward spontaneously, and held out the right hand of fellowship to Mr. Bright at a time when he had been struck down, and after he had given the best years of his life to the public service. The call, therefore, was one to which he felt bound to respond, and he had frankly done so. As to the Reform question, if Birmingham worked for Reform as it did twenty-five years before, they might depend upon it that the present election would not only be important to them as a constituency, and to Mr. Bright as an individual, but also to the best interests of the nation. Mr. George Dawson, who also spoke, said that when the proud Austrian Government heard that John Bright was returned for Birmingham, they would know and feel that it was in vain to league themselves with any emperors to ask of the English nation to put foreign exiles into their power.

Upon the news of his election being telegraphed to him, Mr. Bright wrote a letter to his new constituents, expressing a hope of soon being able to meet them in person. In this hope, however, he was for some time further disappointed. Parliament was called together earlier than usual in the following December ; but feeling unable to begin his own Parliamentary duties before Christmas, Mr. Bright wrote to that effect to Mr. Alderman Lloyd, the chairman of the Liberal Election Committee. No real business was expected to be transacted before February, and therefore he trusted that the interests of his constituents would not suffer from his temporary absence from the House. Mr. Bright added : 'It is because I wished to abstain as much as possible from public affairs, that I have not troubled my constituents with any views I may entertain on the great subjects which have been so much discussed during the past three months. On the question of India, indeed, I feel that it

is almost rashness to offer a decided opinion; and I know not whether we ought to regard with admiration or with pity many of those who have written and spoken so confidently upon it since the occurrence of the insurrection. Judging from the writings of the newspapers and from the speeches of public men, I fear the country is by no means sufficiently aware of the crisis which has arisen, whether we regard the difficulty of restoring order in India, or the obstacles which oppose themselves to the future government of that country. Five years ago, when the Indian Bill was about to come under discussion, I thought I knew something of India, and felt that I could give advice on the subject. But the scene has totally changed, and that which was easy to do in fair weather, may be impossible, or of little avail, when the storm rages. I presume, however, that the days of the Leadenhall Street rulers of India are numbered. Without character and without power, it requires but a vote of Parliament to give legal effect to that which, I believe, the public opinion of England has already decreed. If the coming session shall establish the government of India on a secure and wise basis, so far as that is possible in the unnatural position in which we stand to that country, I shall feel that Parliament has not laboured in vain; and if the threatened postponement of a Reform Bill be a disappointment to me and many others, I shall endeavour to console myself with the hope that the improvement of our representation will, hereafter, be entrusted to more friendly hands than those which now administer the affairs of the country.'

Birmingham, however, began to stir in the question of Reform, as it had done upon the great bill of 1832, and on the 2d of February 1858, a large and influential meeting was held upon the subject, the Mayor presiding. Mr. Bright, who was unable to be present, wrote to the promoters of the meeting, and remarked: 'If your great town, with its great constituency, is only to send two men to Parliament, whilst an equal population and property in some other part of the kingdom is to send twenty men to Parliament, then I say that the franchise is of little avail.' The writer maintained that 'any Reform Bill which is worth a moment's thought or smallest effort to carry it, must at least double—and it ought to do more



than double—the representation of the metropolitan boroughs and the great cities of the United Kingdom.’ On the question of the Ballot, he added : ‘It is worthy of remark that no meeting has been held for many years in favour of Reform at which the Ballot has not been strongly insisted on. If Reform is to be granted to gratify and content reformers, if their judgment and unanimity are sufficient to justify or to force its concession, then surely the Ballot cannot be denied to us. I feel certain it will not long be refused.’

Birmingham had now acquired a representative who reflected lustre upon the borough—a representative whose name was with thousands a synonym for freedom, and justice, and progress. His claims upon the gratitude and admiration of the masses of his countrymen were known and felt ; and every one who valued the independent character and the influence and usefulness of the House of Commons, applauded the step by which the great Midland town restored Mr. Bright to his just place in that assembly.

## CHAPTER XV.

*MR. BRIGHT ON INDIA.*

England and India.—Evils of British Rule.—Lord Palmerston and the French Emperor.—The Conspiracy to Murder Bill.—Defeat and Resignation of the Ministry.—Indian Legislation in 1853.—Mr. Bright on Sir C. Wood's Bill.—Indian Questions in 1858-9.—Results of our Government in the East.—Able Survey by Mr. Bright.—His proposals for the future Government of India.—Lord Canning's Proclamation.—Debate on Lord Ellenborough's Despatch.—The Indian Budget of 1859.—Another powerful appeal by Mr. Bright.—Sir A. Burnes and the Afghan War of 1837-8.—Sir Arthur Cotton at Manchester.—Mr. Bright's Remedies for Indian Famines.



THE affairs of India formed the most prominent topic of discussion in the session of 1858, as did the Reform question in the session ensuing. On both these great questions Mr. Bright delivered some of his finest and most comprehensive speeches. The deep interest which the right hon. gentleman has always taken in India would alone be sufficient to refute the objection sometimes advanced by his opponents, that his genius and sympathies are alike insular and contracted. Twenty-five years ago England was exceedingly backward in her government of India. The East India Company did pretty well what seemed best in its own eyes; and while it had lost its commercial monopoly in the Eastern seas, it still wielded its great administrative power over the rulers and the people of India. Annexation had progressed apace; the Company's financial policy, as one critic has pointed out, was open to severe animadversion—it encouraged the cultivation of injurious drugs for a foreign market in order to maintain its income; it discountenanced the growth of cotton—an article which would have yielded an

abundant crop, and for which there was a constant demand ; internal improvements in the dependencies were utterly neglected ; and, in short, our whole administration in India was such as to bring great discredit upon the East India Company. The continuance of these evils naturally reflected some portion of this discredit upon the Home Government. At length the time came for action, and in 1858 Imperial legislation was initiated.

Before tracing the course of this legislation, however, we must glance for a moment at a measure which unexpectedly led to the downfall of the Palmerston Government. After the abortive attempt of Felice Orsini and his friends to assassinate the Emperor Napoleon III., a strong feeling arose in certain influential French circles that the English law afforded an improper degree of shelter and countenance to foreign refugees and conspirators. This feeling found vent in the French newspapers, but more especially in several congratulatory addresses presented to the Emperor after his escape by certain colonels in the French army, which addresses received additional importance by being published in the official columns of the *Moniteur*. The accusations made against England by M. de Morny in the Legislative Chamber of France, and by M. de Persigny, the French Ambassador in London, led to a strong revulsion of feeling against the Emperor and his Ministers in this country. The idea rapidly gained ground that England was being dictated to by a foreign Power. On the 8th of February 1858, Lord Palmerston introduced his 'Conspiracy to Murder Bill,' but denied that in doing so he was acting under pressure. Indeed, with regard to the addresses complained of, he had, he said, made representations to France, and was commissioned on the part of the Emperor to state that he regretted their publication. His lordship then briefly stated the object of his bill, which proposed to make conspiracy to murder a felony, punishable with penal servitude, and to apply it to all persons with respect to conspiracies to murder wherever intended. An amendment moved by Mr. Kinglake, with the object of deferring legislation, was subsequently withdrawn, and leave was given to bring in the bill. Mr. Bright was amongst those who opposed this measure, and by the time the bill came

on for second reading it had become evident that they were backed up by a large public opinion out of doors. The conviction was strengthened that the Ministers of the Queen were merely acting at the instigation of the French Government. Mr. Milner Gibson moved a series of amendments expressive of sympathy with the French Emperor, and the readiness of the House to amend acknowledged legal defects at once, but also expressing surprise that the Government had not answered the despatch of Count Walewski before calling on the House to amend the law of conspiracy. Mr. Gibson's speech was loudly cheered. He quoted the *Times* to the effect that 'when Lord Palmerston has made up his mind to court the good-will of a foreign Power, no sacrifice of principle or of interest is too great for him. From first to last his character has been the want of a firm and lofty adherence to the known interests of England.' Mr. Bright seconded his friend's motion, but made no speech on the occasion. Vigorous speeches were delivered by Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Gladstone. The last-named observed that the times were grave for liberty, and that 'a measure passed by this House of Commons—the chief hope of freedom—which attempts to establish a moral complicity between us and those who seek safety in repressive measures, will be a blow and a discouragement to that sacred cause in every country in the world.' Lord Palmerston replied, but Mr. Gibson's amendment was carried against Ministers by 234 to 215, or a majority of 19. The Premier resigned in consequence of this vote; and the Earl of Derby, who was summoned by Her Majesty, came into power as the head of a new Conservative Government.

Indian legislation, which had been interrupted by the Ministerial crisis, was resumed by the new Government. In order, however, to understand the position of the East India Company, and the government of India generally, we must first go back to the session of 1853, when Sir Charles Wood, President of the Board of Control in Lord Aberdeen's Ministry, introduced on behalf of the Government a measure for the better government of India. By this bill it was proposed that for the future the relations between the Court of Directors and the Board of Control should remain unchanged, but

that the constitution of the former should be altered, and its patronage curtailed. The members of the Court, twenty-four in number, were to be reduced to eighteen, of whom twelve were to be elected as before, and six nominated by the Crown from Indian servants who had been ten years in the service of the Crown or the Company. Every second year one-third of the number were to go out, but they were to be re-eligible. It was proposed to abolish nominations by favour, and to separate the Governorship of Bengal from the office of Governor-General. The number of the Legislative Council was to be increased to twelve, and its greater efficiency provided for. The superior courts were to be improved, and minor courts were to be instituted in each of the towns of the Presidencies. It was also proposed to raise the character, acquirements, and salaries of the native judges.

On the introduction of this bill, Mr. Bright delivered a speech which attested his mastery of the whole subject. In fact, he and Sir Charles Wood occupied the entire evening. Sir Charles spoke for five hours, viz., from five to ten o'clock,—and Mr. Bright for two hours, from ten to twelve o'clock.

Mr. Bright objected to the scheme entirely, on the ground of the maintenance of the double government, which was a mockery and a delusion; and he was convinced that it would not be approved by the whole Cabinet. It was not possible, he said, amidst cheers and laughter, that thirteen sensible gentlemen, with any pretensions to form a Cabinet, would agree to a measure of that nature. The speaker then examined the various provisions of the measure, showing their inaccuracy, and fortifying his statements as to the condition of India by statistics and information compiled by Mr. Kaye and others on the spot. Coming to the real gist of the measure, he said: 'The right hon. gentleman is afraid of bringing the government of India under the authority of the Crown. What, I should like to know, would have been done if India had been conquered by the troops of the Crown? We should then never have sent some thirty men into a by-street of London to distribute patronage and govern a great country. The government of India would then have been made a department of the Government, with a Council and a

Minister of State. But it appears that the old system of hocus-pocus is still to be carried on. This is no question of Manchester against Essex—of town against country—of Church against Nonconformity. It is a question in which we all have an interest, and in which our children may be more deeply interested than we are ourselves. Should anything go wrong with the finances, we must bear the burden ; or should the people of India by our treatment be goaded into insurrection, we must reconquer the country, or be ignominiously driven out of it.'

After this prophetic warning, Mr. Bright implored the House so to act at the existing juncture, that it might be said hereafter, 'that whatever crimes England originally committed in conquering India, she at least made the best of her position by governing the country as wisely as possible, and left the records and traces of a humane and liberal sway.' With this passage he concluded his address :—

I recollect having heard the noble lord the member for Tiverton (Viscount Palmerston) deliver in this House one of the best speeches I ever listened to. On that occasion the noble lord gloried in the proud name of England, and, pointing to the security with which an Englishman might travel abroad, he triumphed in the idea that his countrymen might exclaim, in the spirit of the ancient Roman, *Civis Romanus sum*. Let us not resemble the Romans merely in our national privileges and personal security. The Romans were great conquerors, but where they conquered they governed wisely. The nations they conquered were impressed so indelibly with the intellectual character of their masters, that, after fourteen centuries of decadence, the traces of civilisation are still distinguishable. Why should not we act a similar part in India? There never was a more docile people, never a more tractable nation. The opportunity is present, and the power is not wanting. Let us abandon the policy of aggression, and confine ourselves to a territory ten times the size of France, with a population four times as numerous as that of the United Kingdom. Surely that is enough to satisfy the most gluttonous appetite for glory and supremacy. Educate the people of India, govern them wisely, and gradually the distinctions of caste will disappear, and they will look upon us rather as benefactors than as conquerors. And if we desire to see Christianity, in some form, professed in that country, we shall sooner attain our object by setting the example of a high-toned Christian morality, than by any other means we can employ.'

Leave was eventually given to bring in the bill, but when it came on for second reading, Lord Stanley moved a resolution against it. Mr. Lowe, Mr. Macaulay, Mr. Cobden, and Sir James Graham delivered eloquent speeches during the debate, and Mr. Bright again

addressed the House. He dwelt on the miseries of the population in India, and observed that the town of Manchester alone had for years spent more in its own improvements than had been spent in India by a Government drawing annually £29,000,000 of taxes, and ruling more than 100,000,000 of people. He again insisted upon the popularity which a Government direct from the Crown would enjoy in India. In concluding, he urged with regard to our Indian Empire that if it was said it could be kept only by force and terror, after having been conquered by force—if it was to be governed by a government in a mask—if the people and Parliament of England were to be shut out from all consideration with regard to it—why then the glory of that House would have departed, and we should have proved ourselves a nation which, having conquered a country, had maintained merely the conquest of arms, while we had not the intellect, the benevolence, or the ability to govern it as it deserved.

The second reading was carried by a large majority, but lengthy discussions ensued in Committee. Improvements in the bill, some of which were due to Mr. Bright, were effected; and in the House of Lords the measure was subjected to still further revision; but eventually it passed, and became law.

We now come to the legislative measures of 1858 and 1859. The terrible Indian Mutiny having been suppressed, a bill was brought forward early in the former session for the purpose of placing the possessions of the East India Company under the immediate authority of the Crown. The Government, however, being defeated, as already shown, on the Conspiracy Bill, the measure was withdrawn. The question, nevertheless, was taken up by Lord Derby's Ministry, and India Bill No. 2 was produced on the 26th of March. Mr. Disraeli announced that, amongst other features of the bill, it provided that five members in the proposed council of eighteen should be elected by the constituencies of the following cities,—London, Manchester, Liverpool, Glasgow, and Belfast. Mr. Bright warned the Government to reconsider the measure, and Lord J. Russell said that the hon. member's opinion of the delusive character of its provisions had much foundation, and was largely shared. The noble lord proposed that the bill should be withdrawn, and that

resolutions should be passed in a Committee of the whole House, the acceptance of which would be useful in guiding the policy of the Government. Mr. Disraeli accepted the suggestion, and No. 2. Bill disappeared. On the 24th of June it was succeeded by Bill No. 3. The leading principles of the measure were that the government of India should be transferred to the Crown, that the administration of Indian affairs should be by a responsible Minister, and that this Minister should be assisted by a Council.

Lord Stanley moved the second reading, and the chief feature in the debate which ensued was a very able and comprehensive speech by Mr. Bright, in which he explained fully his views as to the best mode of governing our Eastern dependencies. He should not oppose the second reading, he said, though there were clauses in the bill of which he disapproved. As to the government of India, what were the changes required? What was the condition of the people? The great body of them were in a state of impoverishment, dejection, and suffering. Industry was neglected, and perjury and its attendant evils prevailed in our courts of justice. With regard to public works, in a single English county there were more roads than were to be found in the whole of India; and the city of Manchester, in supplying its inhabitants with water, had spent a larger sum than the East India Company had spent in fourteen years in public works of every kind throughout their vast dominions. There could not be a better test, in the long run, of good government than the state of the finances; and the normal condition of the government of India was one of financial deficiency and bankruptcy. He held, therefore, that the government of India was a bad government; and he traced its vices to its extravagance in the carrying on of unjust wars, and its wholesale annexations. 'I have come to the conclusion,' continued Mr. Bright, 'which many hon. members probably share with me, that the edifice we have reared in India is too vast. There are few men now, and least of all those connected with the East India Company, who, looking back to the policy that has been pursued, will not be willing to admit that it has not been judicious but hazardous, that territories have been annexed that had better have been left independent, and that wars have been



undertaken which were as needless as they were altogether unjustifiable. The immense empire that has been conquered is too vast for management, its base is in decay, and during the last twelve months it has appeared to be tottering to its fall. Who or what is the instrument—the Cabinet, the Government, or the person—by whom this evil policy is carried on ?

Mr. Bright went on to say that the power of the Governor-General was too great ; and he should, if he could, propose as an indispensable condition that this office, the duties of which were far greater than any human being was competent to fulfil, should be abolished. If asked to suggest a substitute, he thought we should have presidencies in India, and not an empire. If he were Minister, and could get the House to agree with him, he would have five presidencies in India, perfectly equal, administered from Calcutta, Madras, Bombay, Agra, and Lahore. Among these governments, there would be a generous rivalry for good, instead of utter stagnation ; evil ambition would be checked ; there would be no Governor so great that he could not be controlled ; and if we were at last driven from India, we should leave it in the form of so many compact states, able to support their own government, and not a prey to anarchy and discord. When this bill passed, the hon. member further said, he would proclaim a general amnesty, put an end to all mischievous inquiries into titles to landed estates, and hold sacred the right of adoption, telling the people of India that we believed that the Christian religion was true, and the best for mankind ; but that that religion taught us to respect the rights of conscience, and that the Parliament and the Queen of England had resolved that no wrong should be done to the millions who professed creeds which they believed to be true ; and he would establish a Court of Appeal in India, composed of judges of high character, for the settlement of disputes between the Government and its subjects. From Mr. Bright's peroration we give the following extracts :—

'There are positions and times in the history of every country, as in the lives of individuals, when courage and action are absolute salvation ; and now the Crown of England, acting by the advice of the responsible Ministers, must, in my opinion, have recourse to a great and unusual measure in order to allay the anxieties which prevail

throughout the whole of India. The people of India do not like us, but they scarcely know where to turn if we left them. They are sheep literally without a shepherd. They are people whom you have subdued, and who have the highest and strongest claims upon you—claims which you cannot forget—claims which, if you do not act upon, you may rely upon it that, if there be a judgment for nations—as I believe there is—as for individuals, our children in no distant generation must pay the penalty which we have purchased by neglecting our duty to the populations of India. . . . I believe that upon this question depends very much, for good or for evil, the future of this country of which we are citizens, and which we all regard and love so much. You have had enough of military reputation on Eastern fields; you have gathered large harvests of that commodity, be it valuable or be it worthless. I invite you to something better, and higher, and holier than that; I invite you to a glory not “famed by conquest’s crimson wing,” but based upon the solid and lasting benefits which I believe the Parliament of England can, if it will, confer upon the countless populations of India.’

This remarkable speech attracted great attention, and even those who most widely differed from it admired its power and the breadth by which it was characterised. The bill was read a second time. In Committee fresh clauses were added, amongst them being one carried by Mr. Gladstone, limiting the employment of East Indian troops to our Indian possessions. The bill ultimately passed both Houses, and became law.

In the month of May another important debate in connection with India arose. An incomplete copy of a proclamation by Lord Canning, the Governor-General, having been published, threatening confiscation to the insurgent landowners of Oude, Lord Ellenborough, the Minister for India, sent a despatch severely censuring this proclamation. This despatch became public, and led to his lordship’s resignation, and very nearly to the defeat of the Government. A vote of censure was moved in both Houses of Parliament, but not carried, Lord Ellenborough simplifying the crisis for the Government by voluntarily resigning office. In the Lords, however, out of a House composed of 325 members (a very large number), the motion was only defeated by a majority of nine. Mr. Cardwell brought on the matter in the Commons, but after a debate extending over several nights, the motion was withdrawn, in consequence of representations made to the mover to the effect that Lord Canning had given up his policy of confiscation. The Ministerial crisis, to which some had looked forward, was thus averted.

Mr. Bright spoke during the debate, and condemned the policy of the proclamation. His speech was exceedingly happy, alike from its humour, its argumentative power, and its eloquence. After declaring that there was no concert between himself and the Secretary to the India Board as to the proclamation, he said that the Solicitor-General had furnished a complete and satisfactory answer to all the charges against the Government. If the resolution were carried, the people of Oude would regard the vote as an approval of the proclamation. All admitted that the people of Oude were not mutineers, yet the proclamation would produce, not a political, but a social revolution in that country. The extinction of the proprietary right in the soil would apply to more than forty thousand large landowners. He believed that the proclamation sanctioned this wholesale confiscation, and that the resolution sanctioned the proclamation. It would be so read in India, and it would be one of the most unfortunate declarations that ever went from this country to India. Mr. Bright traced our pecuniary dealings with Oude, which he said ought to make the House pause before it filled up the cup of injury which had been presented to the people of that country. He also reviewed the despatch, and the effects it might produce upon the feelings of Lord Canning. If the question was between hurting the feelings of Lord Canning and sanctioning this proclamation, he should have no hesitation as to his choice. Upon a probable change of the Government as the result of Mr. Cardwell's motion, the speaker amusingly remarked, 'We are told, and the whole country has been in a state of expectation and wonder upon it, that two eminent statesmen have actually dined together; and I am very glad to hear that men engaged in the strife of politics can dine together without personal hostility. I say nothing of the viands that were eaten. I say nothing of the beverage that was in the "loving cup" that went round. One of our oldest and greatest poets has told us that

"Nepenthe is a drink of soverayne grace."

He says that it was devised by the gods to subdue contention and subject the passions; but that it was given only to the aged and the

wise, who were prepared by it to take their places with ancient heroes in a higher sphere. But that could not have been the contents of the "loving cup" in this instance, for these aged statesmen are still determined to cling to this world, and to mix, as heretofore, with all the vigour and the fire of youth in the turmoil and contention of public life. But does the fact of this dinner point to reconciliation, and to a firm and liberal administration? I believe that any such Government would be the worst of all coalitions. I believe that it would be built upon insincerity, and I suspect it would be of no advantage to the country. Therefore I am not anxious to see such a Government attempted.'

With these impassioned sentences the member for Birmingham concluded: 'I am willing to avow that I am in favour of justice and conciliation—of the law of justice and of kindness. Justice and mercy are the supreme attributes of the perfection which we call Deity, but all men everywhere comprehend them; there is no speech nor language in which their voice is not heard, and they cannot be vainly exercised with regard to the docile and intelligent millions of India. You have had the choice. You have tried the sword. It has broken; it now rests broken in your grasp; and you stand humbled and rebuked. You stand humbled and rebuked before the eyes of civilised Europe. You may have another chance. You may, by possibility, have another opportunity of governing India. If you have, I beseech you to make the best use of it. Do not let us pursue such a policy as many men in India, and some in England, have advocated, but which hereafter you will have to regret, which can end only, as I believe, in something approaching to the ruin of this country, and which must, if it be persisted in, involve our name and nation in everlasting disgrace.'

In August 1859, Sir Charles Wood brought in the Indian Budget. After dealing fully with the questions of income and expenditure, the Indian Secretary stated that when all was done that we could hope to do, there must still be for a year or two a considerable deficiency in our Indian finances, and five or six millions sterling would have to be provided by Parliament. It was the intention of the Government to select a person versed in finance

to be sent to India, to take the revenue and financial department under his charge. Sir C. Wood maintained that there had been a progressive improvement in the revenues of India, while of the future of the country he by no means despaired; and he concluded by moving a resolution enabling the Government to raise in the United Kingdom for the service of the government of India £5,000,000 to meet the demands of the year.

The Loan Bill passed through both Houses, but before the formal resolutions were taken in the Commons, Mr. Bright, in earnest and solemn terms, once more besought the House to look its enormous responsibilities in connection with India in the face. He confessed that he took a gloomy view of the destinies of that country. To him the danger seemed every year to increase in magnitude, and having paid some attention to the subject, he desired to take his share in confronting the evil. On the question of annexation, he observed, 'No policy can be more lunatic than the policy of annexation we have pursued of late years in India, and the calamity we are now meeting is the natural and inevitable consequence of the folly we have committed. It is not easy for great generals and statesmen who have been made earls and marquises, and had bronze statues put up in their honour in our public squares—it is not easy for the statesmen who have done all this to turn round and reverse it all; they have not the moral courage to do it; it might be an act of peril; it might appear a descent from the summit of empire, and be wrongly construed throughout the world. But as a question of finance and good government, we should, a few years hence, admit that it was a sound policy.' Replying to Sir Charles Wood's statement that everything was satisfactory in 1853, Mr. Bright said that in that year it did happen that the deficit was £143,000 only. But it gave a better idea of the case to note that in the three years preceding the Mutiny, the deficit was £2,823,000. It must be a bad government that did not defray its expenses out of the taxes; yet in India millions were levied on the sale and transit of opium, by a process which was not taxation. That was in danger of being impaired or cut off altogether. Next year the debt would be £100,000,000.

That the money could be borrowed at all, even at a high rate of interest, only arose from the fact that England contrived to scramble through her difficulties, and keep good faith. With regard to an Imperial guarantee, he did not oppose it from sympathy with English taxpayers, but because if we let 'the service of India' put its hand into the pockets of the English people, it was impossible to foresee to what lengths of unimagined extravagance it would go. The military expenditure now absorbed the net revenue, and not a farthing was left to pay the public creditor. He predicted that either the Government of India must come to an end, or England must become tributary to India. Mr. Bright declared that the Civil Service was overpaid; that it did not deserve the praises heaped upon it; and he proposed that its income should be reduced one-half. He also argued against maintaining an European or a native army larger than was absolutely required. The Mutiny had been suppressed by 45,000 men; the people of Oude had been disarmed; and there was now no power in India for armed resistance except the native army, which had been built up of late to a greater extent than ever. He would not be ruled by the authority of military men as to the force which should be maintained, and he showed that if a large European force were kept, the supremacy of the conquering race would be displayed in an offensive manner. But when the English were weak in India, the natives were treated with respect. A Government with a vast army must always be in a difficulty. There was a constant strain as to how it was to be paid. Moreover, 'a large army will render it impossible for you to hold this country, for you will have a constantly increasing debt, and anarchy must inevitably overwhelm you in the end. A small army, a moderate, conciliatory, and just Government, with the finances in a prosperous condition, and I know not but for generations and centuries this country may possess a share, and a large share, in the government of those vast territories which it has conquered.'

Mr. Bright went on to affirm that there was no government in India, and no independent English opinion; while the Civil Service was privileged, arrogant, and tyrannous. The Governor-General

was the creature of the services, and procrastination was the very nature of the Government. Lord Stanley had condemned the annexation of Dhar, but no notice had been taken of his letter. Sir Charles Trevelyan had sought to introduce beneficial changes at Madras, but he had raised a hornets' nest about him. After drawing a telling and sarcastic picture of the helpless position of a Governor-General, hampered by circumstances and conditions, Mr. Bright came to his own remedy for India, viz., the decentralisation of the Government, alleging Ceylon as an example, and recommending electoral councils for Bombay and Madras. He was convinced that not a single step would be made towards the improvement of India, unless we changed our whole system of government, and gave to each Presidency a government with more independent powers than were now possessed by them. What would be thought if the whole of Europe was under one Governor, who knew only the language of the Feejee Islands, and if his subordinates were like himself, only more intelligent than the inhabitants of the Feejee Islands are supposed to be? Yet we set a Governor over 150,000,000 of human beings, in a climate where the European could not do the work he has to do so well as here; and we seemed to think that the atmosphere would be always calm and the sea always smooth. 'And so the government of India goes on; there are promises without number of beneficial changes, but we never hear that India is much better or worse than before.' Mr. Bright, in conclusion, presented this powerful description of our relations towards India :—

'Look at your responsibilities. India is ruled by Englishmen, but remember that in that unfortunate country you have destroyed every form of government, but your own; that you have cast the thrones of the natives to the ground. Princely families, once the rulers of India, are now either houseless wanderers in the land they once called their own, or are pensioners on the bounty of those strangers by whom their fortunes have been overthrown. They who were noble and gentle for ages are now merged in the common mass of the people. All over those vast regions there are countless millions, helpless and defenceless, deprived of their natural leaders and their ancient chiefs, looking with only some small ray of hope to that omnipresent and irresistible Power by which they have been subjected. I appeal to you on behalf of that people. I have besought your mercy and your justice for many a year past; and if I speak to you earnestly now, it is because the object for which I plead is dear to my heart. Is it not possible to touch a chord in the hearts of Englishmen, to raise

them to a sense of the miseries inflicted on that unhappy country by the crimes and the blunders of our rulers here? If you have steeled your hearts against the natives, if nothing can stir you to sympathy with their miseries, at least have pity upon your own countrymen. Rely upon it the state of things which now exists in India must, before long, become most serious. I hope that you will not show to the world that, although your fathers conquered the country, you have not the ability to govern it. You had better disencumber yourselves of the fatal gift of empire than that the present generation should be punished for the sins of the past. I speak in condemnatory language, because I believe it to be deserved. I hope that no future historian will have to say that the arms of England in India were irresistible, and that an ancient empire fell before their victorious progress,—yet that finally India was avenged, because the power of her conqueror was broken by the intolerable burdens and evils which she cast upon her victim, and that this wrong was accomplished by a waste of human life and a waste of wealth which England, with all her power, was unable to bear.'

Mr. Bright's views upon the government of India were of course not popular amongst those persons who supported to the full English interests in India. There is a very large class of individuals in this country who view India merely as a field for providing light and remunerative employment for the youth of our aristocracy, and others. Any suggestions therefore for the curtailment of the Indian services, and the reduction of our vast expenditure in the East, were regarded by this numerous body of persons with great disfavour. Then, too, there were many politicians and statesmen who honestly differed from Mr. Bright upon the principles on which India ought to be governed. Yet there never was an unofficial orator who delivered such speeches as those of Mr. Bright on this question, either as regards their wide range, their complete grasp of the subject or the marked character of their eloquence.

On several occasions subsequent to those already dealt with, Mr. Bright has touched upon Indian affairs. In the session of 1861 Mr. Dunlop brought forward a resolution to inquire into the discrepancies between certain sets of documents relating to the Afghan War of 1837-8. Some passages in the despatches of Sir Alexander Burnes had been mutilated, in order to make it appear that he advised a policy which he really condemned. Mr. Dunlop accordingly moved for a committee to inquire into the alleged mutilation of despatches presented to the House. He was answered by Lord Palmerston, but Mr. Bright afterwards took up the matter in a very spirited



speech. He complained that the noble lord had heaped insult upon the memory of a man who died in the execution of what he believed to be his public duty. Having reviewed the circumstances of the case as affecting Sir A. Burnes, Mr. Bright said, 'Nothing can sink Parliament to a lower state of degradation and baseness than that it should permit Ministers of the Crown to lay upon the table, upon questions involving the sacrifice of £20,000,000 of money, and 20,000 lives, documents which are not true—which slander our public servants, and which slander them most basely when they are dead and are not here to answer.' Although the motion was negatived by a large majority, the memory of Sir Alexander Burnes was vindicated.

In a speech delivered at Manchester on the 11th of December 1877, Mr. Bright again returned to the important question of the government of India. The occasion was the reception of Sir Arthur Cotton, by the members of the Indian Association in Manchester, who were desirous of hearing the opinions which Sir Arthur entertained as to the means of preventing famine in India for the future. After passing briefly in review our mode of governing India, Mr. Bright observed that the country was at that moment in a state of great and abject poverty. England for the most part took no notice of India and her famines until there came the calamity of the Mutiny, when England suffered greatly, and passed through a period of humiliation. When the Mutiny took place, the East India Company fell, yet that old institution had been praised up to its very fall. Referring next to the past famines, and the one now imminent, Mr. Bright asked, What is the remedy? Sir Charles Trevelyan had said he was satisfied that with a thorough system of irrigation, famines would be impossible in India. If canals for navigation or irrigation (continued Mr. Bright) were made upon some grand scheme, determined by competent and eminent engineers, you would find the produce of nearly all the districts of India, all those not hitherto irrigated, would probably be doubled. But as regards such matters our policy was generally to wait until the horse was stolen before locking the stable door. As to the government of India, he did not believe that half a dozen

gentlemen in Calcutta were capable of administering the government of some two hundred millions of people. But, unfortunately, there were civilians, engineers, military men, everybody—who were in favour of, and had an interest in, patronage, promotion, salaries, and ultimately pensions. There was also no public opinion to fight in favour of economy. Even the press in India which touched the Government was, as a rule, in favour of annexation of more territory, more places, more salaries, and ultimately more pensions. A government such as that which existed had some fatal defect which at no distant time must bring disaster and humiliation to the Government and the people on whose behalf it ruled. Mr. Bright again advocated the creation of five or six great independent presidencies as the best solution of the difficulty, especially as the day must come, from some cause or other, when the power of England would be withdrawn from India. Nearly two years after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright, in addressing his constituents at Birmingham, chiefly upon the Eastern policy of the Government, observed that we were in the habit of hearing constantly that Russia was a despotic country, and the Czar the greatest of despots. ‘But our Indian Empire contains a population nearly three times as great as that of the Russian Empire, and it is an Empire also that is governed by a despotism—that is, a government which has no representative institutions, and in which a few men with some one at the top of them—an Emperor in Russia, in India a Governor-General representing the Queen of England—administer the whole government of the Empire: it does not follow that because it is a despotism it should be unjust or cruel.’ But he proceeded to ridicule the manner of our government in India, and remarked that the taxation was oppressive to such a degree that all the authorities in India admitted you could not turn the screw any more. India was pretty nearly bankrupt, and there was generally a deficit. As to our holding India, we held it at a cost which was more than double all the pecuniary benefits which we had acquired by trade in all that vast possession. ‘But people may say then, perhaps, “You will give up India,” and I should say “No.” I do not say anything of the kind, but I think it would be worth while to become a little more rational about it.’

This great question of the government of India is one to which Mr. Bright has ever paid the closest and most special attention. Our responsibilities in connection with that gigantic dependency have always weighed heavily upon him; and had he so chosen, upon the accession of Mr. Gladstone's first Ministry to office, he might have succeeded to the very important and onerous office of Secretary of State for India. The soundness of some of his views upon India has already been proved, and it is possible that conviction may follow with regard to others. England still holds her vast Indian Empire by a more direct sovereignty than was once the case; and by excellent government she may possibly hold it for a long time to come; but he must be a bold man who would venture to predict the perpetual and undivided sway of Great Britain over a territory so immense, with its ever-increasing myriads of population.

## CHAPTER XVI.

*THE REFORM QUESTION IN 1858-9.*

Parliamentary Reform in 1858.—Mr. Locke King's County Franchise Bill.—The Ballot.—Reform Campaign in the Provinces.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Points of his proposed Reform scheme.—Our Foreign Policy.—Reception of Mr. Gibson and Mr. Bright at Manchester.—What a Reform Bill should include.—Mr. Bright at Edinburgh and Glasgow.—The Derby-Disraeli Reform Bill of 1859.—Debate on the Second Reading.—Speech by Mr. Bright.—Defeat of the Government.—Dissolution of Parliament.—Election at Birmingham.—Opposition to Mr. Bright.—Scene at the Nomination.—Animated Speech by Mr. Bright.—Great Liberal Victory.—Meeting of Parliament.—Spirited Debate.—Motion carried against the Government.—Their Resignation.—A Palmerston Ministry formed.—Important Debate on Financial Policy.—Miscellaneous Questions.—Mr. Cobden at Rochdale.—Reform Conference in London.



FROM India we now pass to a subject of great interest in domestic politics, and one in which for many years Mr. Bright played a very prominent part, viz., Parliamentary Reform. For a considerable period before Mr. Bright's winter campaign of 1858, it had been generally conceded that the great Act of 1832 required to be supplemented by another and still larger measure of political enfranchisement. Hitherto, however, the question had either been trifled with, or matters of greater moment had been allowed to damp the reforming zeal of Governments.

But in the session of 1858, several measures were introduced into the House of Commons bearing collaterally upon the subject of Parliamentary Reform. Mr. Locke King brought in a bill for the abolition of the property qualification heretofore required for the representatives of English and Irish constituencies. The Conserva-

tive Government supported the proposition, and Mr. King's bill was carried. It also passed the House of Lords, and became law. No such happy fate, however, awaited its author's further proposition for the extension of the franchise for counties in England and Wales to occupiers at £10 per annum—a measure which had been brought forward in several previous sessions. The Chancellor of the Exchequer now said that as the Government intended to give their consideration to the whole subject of Parliamentary Reform, he felt it his duty to move the previous question. Leave was nevertheless given to bring in the bill, and its second reading was afterwards carried by a large majority; but in consequence of the lateness of the period, and the pressure of other matters, Mr. Locke King was compelled to abandon his measure for that session. Mr. Caird also made an unsuccessful attempt to carry a bill for the assimilation of the county franchise of Scotland with that of England. Lastly, on the 8th of June Mr. Berkeley brought on his annual resolution in favour of vote by ballot. The motion was opposed by Sir G. C. Lewis and Lord Palmerston, who made a good deal of the alleged failure of the ballot in the United States. Mr. Bright, premising that he should not go either to the United States or to Australia, demanded that the measure should be considered with reference to the conditions of our own society; and insisted that this country—where there were so many incentives to undue influence, and so little power of resisting it—was of all countries that in which this question should be fairly considered. And if the remedy was good it ought to be applied. Describing the secret operation of influence in our electoral system, he cited cases proving the intolerable working of the screw spoken of by Mr. Berkeley. We must have a Reform Bill, and no measure of that kind would be complete without the great principle of the ballot. He asked whether it was not a fact that, in every petition for Parliamentary Reform, the House was asked to include the ballot, and that at almost every public meeting held for years past, the establishment of secret voting by the ballot was made a cardinal point? Was the House prepared to disregard this? Observing that the ballot was no sacred principle, but a mere matter of electoral machinery, no member, he said, could

be charged with inconsistency in consenting to try this great experiment. Mr. Bright appealed to both sides of the House to lay aside their fears, to have a little faith, and not to be misled by the flimsy arguments of Lord Palmerston, but for the sake of morality, and the tranquillity of the country, to give a candid and favourable consideration to Mr. Berkeley's proposition. The motion, however, was lost by 294 votes to 197.

In the ensuing October, Mr. Bright began his earnest and vigorous Reform campaign in the provinces. Disappointed with the lukewarmness which had crept over our public men in regard to this question, his language was of an unusually vehement character. Those who were opposed to Reform altogether alleged that he damaged his cause by the violence of his advocacy; but there are moments in the history of nations when even stronger language than Mr. Bright's would be justifiable. Every great benefactor and reformer is liable to the charge of excessive zeal, yet without such zeal many of the greatest boons ever conferred upon the human race would still be wanting. However, in this matter let not us, his contemporaries, but posterity, judge Mr. Bright.

The first great meeting was held at Birmingham, under peculiar and memorable circumstances, on the 27th of October 1858. Mr. Bright had just recovered from his serious illness, and nearly three years had elapsed since he was able to appear upon a public platform for the purpose of addressing any large body of his countrymen. This was, in addition, the first time upon which Mr. Bright had met his new constituents at Birmingham. In opening his speech he made some touching references to this fact, and expressed his gratitude to the Supreme for the signal favour which had been extended to him. Here the warm cheering which had greeted the speaker on first appearing before the vast audience in the Town Hall was renewed. After a graceful allusion to the sympathy which had been shown him in his affliction, and to the atonement which Birmingham had made for the passionate and ungenerous treatment of Manchester, the hon. member referred to the prevalent misrepresentation of his attitude in regard to the Crimean War. 'Now,' said Mr. Bright, 'after all is over except the tax-gatherer, and the sorrows

of those who have lost their friends in the war, I will just in one sentence say that I am still unable to discover what compensation England has for the hundred millions of money she expended, or what compensation Europe has for the three hundred millions squandered by all the parties engaged in that frightful contest.' Turning next to the question of Parliamentary Reform, he pointed out that within the last few years they had had four Governments pledged to Parliamentary Reform. All parties now pretended to be in love with it, but their speeches on the question reminded him of the condition of that deplorable Atlantic Cable, of which he read that 'the currents were visible, but the signals were wholly indistinct.' Mr. Bright next proceeded to show, by the aid of facts and statistics, that the Parliament, as then constituted, did not fairly represent the nation. The whole system of representation was unequal and dishonest; there were in the House of Commons 330 members (more than half the House) whose whole number of constituents did not amount to more than 180,000; while there were at the same time 24 members only whose constituents were upwards of 200,000 in number. There was, besides, the great significant fact that in Great Britain and Ireland five out of every six men you met had no vote. Mr. Bright then referred at some length to the House of Lords, and drew a very unflattering picture of the typical peer. The House of Peers did not travel very fast,—even what was called a Parliamentary train was too fast for its nerves; in fact, it never travelled at all unless somebody shoved it. He would not attack the House of Lords, but the question between the Peers and the people was one which could not be evaded. The Peer too often gave his vote against those great measures on which the country had set its heart. Then too there was another kind of Peer which he was afraid to touch upon—'that creature of—what shall I say?—of monstrous, nay, even of adulterous birth—the Spiritual Peer.' They were always told that Peers were necessary as a check, and if that was so they answered their purpose admirably.

Discussing the question of the suffrage, Mr. Bright spoke in favour of a Rating Franchise, and he added that he knew no good reason why the franchise should not be as extensive in the counties

as in the boroughs. He also advocated a more equal division of electoral power, the existing system being but a disgraceful fraud. Without redistribution of seats, representation would remain for the future very little better than a farce. The third great point which he insisted upon was that any Reform Bill which pretended to be generally satisfactory to reformers must concede the shelter and protection of the ballot. 'Let us,' said Mr. Bright, 'have a real bill, a good bill, or no bill at all.' But the question at the moment was in the hands of the enemy, and he had his fears. As to the bugbear of 'Americanising' our institutions, if we were at liberty to draw science, products for our manufactures, and literature from every country in the world, why should we not, if we saw anything good in the politics of another country, be equally at liberty to take a lesson in that also? Those persons who affirmed that the franchise, the distribution, and the ballot, which operated so well in America, would be perilous in England, libelled the people of this country, and libelled our institutions.

Mr. Bright urged upon his hearers and the country the necessity of public meetings, of petitions, and, when the proper time came, attendance at the polling-booths. Finally, he said, 'Shall we, even for a moment, be hopeless of our great cause? I feel almost ashamed even to argue it to such a meeting as this. I call to mind where I am, and who are those whom I see before me. Am I not in the town of Birmingham—England's central capital? and do not these eyes look upon the sons of those who, not thirty years ago, shook the fabric of privilege to its base? Not a few of the strong men of that time are now white with age. They approach the confines of their mortal day. Its evening is cheered with the remembrance of that great contest, and they rejoice in the freedom they have won. Shall their sons be less noble than they? Shall the fire which they kindled be extinguished with you? I see your answer in every face. You are resolved that the legacy which they bequeathed to you, you will hand down in an accumulated wealth of freedom to your children. As for me, my voice is feeble. I feel now sensibly and painfully that I am not what I was. I speak with diminished fire; I act with a lessened force; but as I am, my



countrymen and my constituents, I will, if you will let me, be found in your ranks in the impending struggle.'

A scene remarkable for its enthusiasm followed this statement of Mr. Bright's programme on the great question then agitating the public mind.

On the following day the hon. gentleman further discussed the details of the Reform question with a deputation from the Reformers' Union, and on the 29th he attended a banquet given in the Town Hall. Although the speech which he delivered on this occasion was devoted chiefly to a defence of his views on Foreign Policy, we shall preserve the consecutiveness of our narrative by dealing with it in its due order. A letter was read from Mr. Cobden, in which he said, 'The electors of Birmingham may justly feel proud of their present position. Their reversal of the sentence passed upon Mr. Bright by his late constituents has been ratified by the approving voice of the country and of the civilised world.'

Mr. Bright began his address by reference to an alleged difference of sentiment between his constituents and himself in matters of foreign policy, and he asked how any man should dare to say to any one of his countrymen, because he happened to hold a different opinion on questions of great public policy, that therefore he was un-English, and was to be condemned as anti-national? He then proceeded to demonstrate that the views which he and his friends held in this respect were not novel or unpatriotic, but were associated with the names of many of the most eminent statesmen that ever presided over the legislative councils of England. He illustrated this assertion by a reference to the declared opinions of Sir Robert Walpole, Mr. Charles James Fox, Earl Grey, and Sir Robert Peel. Dealing with the results of the sacrifices made to the war spirit, Mr. Bright said he believed he understated the same when he alleged that in pursuit of a Will-o'-the-wisp ('the liberties of Europe, and the balance of power'), there had been extracted from the industry of the people of this small island no less an amount than £2,000,000,000 sterling. Then came this graphic passage:—

'When I try to think of that sum of £2,000,000,000 there is a sort of vision passes before my mind's eye. I see your peasant labourer delve and plough, sow and reap,

sweat beneath the summer's sun, or grow prematurely old before the winter's blast. I see your noble mechanic, with his manly countenance and his matchless skill, toiling at his bench or his forge. I see one of the workers in our factories in the north, a woman—a girl, it may be—gentle and good, as many of them are, as your sisters and daughters are—I see her intent upon the spindle, whose revolutions are so rapid that the eye fails altogether to detect them, or watching the alternating flight of the unresting shuttle. I turn again to another portion of your population, which, “plunged in mines, forgets a sun was made,” and I see the man who brings up from the secret chambers of the earth the elements of the riches and greatness of his country. When I see all this, I have before me a mass of produce and of wealth which I am no more able to comprehend than I am that £2,000,000,000 of which I have spoken, but I behold in its full proportions the hideous error of your Governments, whose fatal policy consumes in some cases a half, never less than a third, of all the results of that industry which God intended should fertilise and bless every home in England, but the fruits of which are squandered in every part of the surface of the globe, without producing the smallest good to the people of England.’

The speaker next observed that the great territorial families of England, which were enthroned at the Revolution, had followed their prey like the jackals of the desert : as a consequence of the foreign policy which he denounced, from the time of William III. wars had been multiplied, taxes increased, loans made, and the Government expenditure greatly augmented. ‘There is no actuary in existence,’ said Mr. Bright (in a passage of his speech which was warmly cheered, though it subsequently gave great offence in many quarters), ‘who can calculate how much of the wealth, of the strength, of the supremacy of the territorial families of England has been derived from an unholy participation in the fruits of the industry of the people, which have been wrested from them by every device of taxation, and squandered in every conceivable crime of which a Government could possibly be guilty. The more you examine this matter, the more you will come to the conclusion which I have arrived at, that this foreign policy, this regard for “the liberties of Europe,” this care at one time for “the Protestant interests,” this excessive love for the “balance of power,” is neither more nor less than a gigantic system of out-door relief for the aristocracy of Great Britain.’ (Great laughter.)

The hon. member then proceeded to remark upon the great number and the extraordinary character of the treaties and obligations we had unnecessarily entered into with almost every

European nation, and also with the East; and he showed how much the insurrection in India and the war with China arose from a policy which attributed English glory to this system. The notion that English trade had benefited by such proceedings was delusive, for all our colonies had been a loss to us, save that of Australia. Why, the consequences of entertaining such feelings as he had described had been that, within the last twenty years, our naval and military expenses had gone up from twelve to twenty-two millions per annum; and yet there was nobody that he knew who proposed to invade England. With regard to this fear of invasion, and the enormous expenditure it cost us in consequence, Mr. Bright said: 'There is no causeway to Britain; the free waves of the sea flow day and night for ever round her shores; and yet there are people going about with whom this hallucination is so strong that they do not merely discover it quietly to their friends, but they write it down in double-ledged columns, in leading articles,—nay, some of them actually get up on platforms and proclaim it to hundreds and thousands of their fellow-countrymen. I should like to ask you whether these delusions are to last for ever, whether this policy is to be the perpetual policy of England, whether these results are to go on gathering and gathering until there come, as come there must inevitably, some dreadful catastrophe on our country?'

Abuse and mismanagement, continued the speaker, existed with regard to the enormous sums raised, and an eminent mercantile authority had told him that he could manage the whole affairs of England at one half less than the estimates which were voted every year. As to the fear of Cherbourg, had not France behaved honourably to us in the Crimean War; had she not helped us in China; were the people not told to fall down and worship the Emperor when he came to London; and was not our Queen received with acclamation when she visited Paris? Mr. Bright went on to insist that we could not consistently condemn France for behaviour which we had ourselves so much exhibited. He wanted to inaugurate a new revolution of opinion, one in which among other changes the great anomaly of such a rich country having to raise £7,000,000 for its pauper population, and the unhappy condition of a portion of our

women, would be deeply considered. A duty now devolved upon the advanced members of Parliament and the people of England different from that which would arise from accepting the history of Rome, or any pagan nation, as the test of national greatness. Two nights ago, said Mr. Bright in closing, he had addressed a vast assembly composed to a large extent of those who had no political power, and who had but limited means of informing themselves on these great subjects. Now he spoke to a somewhat different audience, and one which could help to affect sensibly and speedily the course of the Government :—

‘May I ask you, then, to believe, as I do most devoutly believe, that the moral law was not written for men alone in their individual character, but that it was written as well for nations, and for nations great as this of which we are citizens. If nations reject and deride that moral law, there is a penalty which will inevitably follow. It may not come at once, it may not come in our lifetime ; but, rely upon it, the great Italian is not a poet only, but a prophet, when he says—

“The sword of heaven is not in haste to smite,  
Nor yet doth linger.”

We have experience, we have beacons, we have landmarks enough. We know what the past has cost us, we know how much and how far we have wandered, but we are not left without a guide. It is true we have not, as an ancient people had, Urim and Thummim—those oraculous gems on Aaron’s breast—from which to take counsel, but we have the unchangeable and eternal principles of the moral law to guide us, and only so far as we walk by that guidance can we be permanently a great nation, or our people a happy people.’

The fight for Reform had now fairly begun, and in a short time the battle-field was changed from the Midlands, first to the North of England, and subsequently to Scotland. On the 10th of December a *soirée* was given in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, to Mr. Milner Gibson and Mr. Bright, for the purpose of congratulating the hon. member for Birmingham on his restoration to health ; to celebrate the return of himself and his late colleague (Mr. Gibson) to Parliament for the boroughs of Birmingham and Ashton ; and to thank them for their patriotic conduct during the last session of Parliament, as well as for their long and faithful services as representatives for the city of Manchester. This was the first occasion on which the two ex-members had appeared in the city since their

rejection by that constituency. When Mr. Bright and Mr. Gibson made their appearance, the great organ gave out the familiar notes of 'Auld Lang Syne;' and by a spontaneous and as it were electric impulse, the huge gathering caught up the touching strain. Thrilling with enthusiasm as the distinguished guests entered the arena of their former triumphs, the audience rose simultaneously, and accorded them a vehement, prolonged, and deafening reception. The heroes of the ovation struggled in vain to repress their emotion, and were visibly affected by the demonstration of feeling of which they were the objects. In that moment, the ingratitude of Manchester was condoned.

Mr. Bright had been chosen by an important conference of Parliamentary reformers, to elaborate, and in the ensuing session to propose, a new Reform Bill, and this fact lent additional interest to the proceedings. Mr. George Wilson, president of the Anti-Corn Law League of former days, presided. Mr. Milner Gibson having been first heard, Mr. Bright was called upon, but for some minutes was unable to proceed, in consequence of the renewed plaudits of the audience. Quiet having been at length restored, the hon. gentleman began his speech by a reference to the reception of himself and his friend, which appeared like the celebration of some great success. He then turned to the topic of the day by pointing out the fact that the present Ministry were the political descendants of those who, forty years ago, had massacred the citizens of Manchester when they were met for a purpose and on an occasion similar to the present. Next, he observed that what those present proposed was to discuss a question relative to themselves, the Commons of England, and which question had been brought before the country by the Government. He should like to put in as few words as possible what, in his opinion, the House of Commons should be. It should be a House composed of men sent up by the free election of so many of the people voting with such an equality of power as should give a real expression to the opinions of the nation. But could any person say it was so when five out of every six men had no more votes at the poll for a member of Parliament than if they lived in South America or in South Africa? Of the House of

Commons, three hundred and thirty members were returned by less than one-sixth of that very small number of persons to whom the franchise was entrusted. The hon. member (as in one of his previous speeches) then went into some statistics to show how unequally the electoral franchise was distributed, the result of which was, he said, that a House of Commons so formed became for the most part, as he knew it to be, a sort of deputy to the House of Lords, and an organ of the great territorial interests of the country. It hated changes with an animosity that nothing could assuage; it hated economy, it hated equality of taxation. The Succession Duty was a glaring instance; the Income Tax was another instance not less glaring. They gave to property vast influence in the government of the country, and they perpetually shielded property from the burden of taxation. It was the same before the Reform Bill as it was now. The speaker then proceeded to state that every great measure had been extorted by, and conceded to, the people, but had never been freely given even by the Legislature to the country, and instanced the repeal of the Corn Laws as occasioned by a famine, and not 'because the House of Lords or the House of Commons wished to grant it;' and now the Ballot was opposed, the Game Laws upheld, and the question of Church-rates, after years of discussion, was still unsettled, and all owing to undue territorial influence.

Mr. Bright went on to observe that the Government was at a deadlock without Parliamentary Reform, and the measure that he would propose as the basis of the franchise was all ready to his hands. He thus unfolded his scheme:—

'I find in all the parishes from the time of Queen Elizabeth—and, for anything I know, from the time of Alfred—I don't know how many hundred years it has lasted—a franchise with which everybody has been contented, which nobody has condemned, and which has done no harm to law, or order, or the security of property. I find that, when Parliament came to legislate for poor-law unions, they adopted this same franchise as the basis of the union franchise; when they came to legislate for the corporation, they adopted, with some restriction, the same franchise. Why tell me that this franchise does not act properly in the United States? For my argument I do not care whether it does or not. We have tried it here in our parishes, our unions, our corporations; and I say if it acts on the whole advantageously in those depart-

ments of representation, it may be trusted without danger in that more important representation which concerns our Imperial Legislature. . . . Now what is it that I propose? That every householder, of course, because every householder is rated to the poor, shall have a vote; and if a man be not a householder strictly, but if he have an office, or a warehouse, or a stable, or land—if he have any property in his occupation which the poor law taxes—out of which he must contribute to the support of the poor, then I say I would give that man a vote.'

Again, dealing with the charge that we were 'Americanising' our institutions, the speaker quoted Lord John Russell and Lord Carlisle in support of his statements as to the general progress of the United States, and he expressed his regret that the latter nobleman should have shrunk from the conclusion which had been fairly deduced from his uttered opinions. We might refer to America as regards anything but politics. 'You may delight yourself with their charming poets—with Bryant, and Whittier, and Longfellow; you may interest and instruct yourself by their great historians—Bancroft, and Prescott, and Motley; but if you ask how free popular institutions are working among your own countrymen on the American continent, you are denounced as unpatriotic, and charged with treason to the House of Lords.' Affirming that the cause of Reform was a just cause, and must sooner or later prevail, Mr. Bright said, in conclusion, 'From this platform I do not speak to you only—I speak to all my countrymen. If they wish for Reform, if they think me honest, informed, capable on this question, if they have any confidence in those with whom I am associated, then let them meet in their cities, their towns, their villages, in country parishes even, where free speech is not forbidden,—let them meet and speak; let them resolve, and let them petition. If they do this, I think I can promise them that before long they will be in full possession and in free exercise of those political rights which are not more necessary to their national interests than they are consistent with the principles of their boasted Constitution.'

By this time the country had become thoroughly stirred once more upon the great question. The consistent advocates of Reform began to ask themselves whether the members of the Derby Ministry, who professed to be very anxious to settle the matter, could after all be true friends to the cause. Mr. Bright who, as it

was remarked at the time, had to some extent thrown his protecting ægis over the Government in the previous session, now let it be clearly understood that he would be no party to a sham Reform Bill. There was much talk amongst the advanced reformers of again rallying themselves under that old and long-tried friend of the movement, Lord John Russell. Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli were much distrusted, and a measure was looked for from those who had long been the acknowledged leaders of the country upon Reform. Under these circumstances, Mr. Bright went to Scotland, there to agitate the question further. Appearing first at Edinburgh, he addressed a meeting in the Music Hall, one of the largest public rooms in the city, but it proved totally inadequate to contain the vast crowds who assembled to hear the popular orator, and thousands were unable to procure admission. Mr. Bright spoke at great length, insisting, though with change of rhetorical treatment, upon the points which in previous addresses he had declared to be necessary and essential in the settlement of the Reform controversy.

Mr. Bright had now formulated a scheme for a bill on the subject of Parliamentary Reform, and its provisions were made known. Its main features were as follows. In the first place, the borough franchise was to be conferred upon all who were rated to the relief of the poor, and on all lodgers who paid a rent of £10; no more freemen were to be created, and the county franchise it was proposed to reduce to £10 rental. In the next place, the returning officers' expenses were to be put on the county or borough rate; and it was further provided that votes should be taken by ballot. It was proposed to disfranchise fifty-six English, twenty-one Scotch, and nine Irish boroughs; and one member was to be taken from each of thirty-four other boroughs. The seats thus obtained were to be distributed according to population among the larger towns, counties, and divisions of counties in the United Kingdom. A few days after his appearance at Edinburgh, viz., on the 21st of December, Mr. Bright once more spoke upon Reform, the occasion being a great meeting at Glasgow. He observed that it was now generally conceded that the figures were all on the side of the reformers; and as to the charge that he used the same figures and



facts in his various speeches, he asked what would be said if he used different facts and figures each time he spoke. It was the same case and the same grievance. We had at least six millions of grown men in the United Kingdom, yet there were not more than one million who had votes. Replying to the charge that he was taking numbers only, and neglecting property, Mr. Bright adduced statistics to show that whether we took numbers, or industry and wealth, or what was comprehended as political independence—he did not care what test was used—there was the same startling, impressive results, that these great populations and great interests were most inadequately represented in the House of Commons under the existing system of representation.

The speaker next observed that there was no novelty in his opinions upon this question; they were the opinions which Mr. Fox and Lord Grey proposed to the House of Commons in 1797. 'I am no conjurer, I have no specific for national happiness, I offer you nothing made up of conundrums and tricks, but I bring before you what I believe to be a rational and substantial project for the arrangement of our representation, which, I venture to say, has had, during the last sixty years, the sanction and approval of many of the greatest minds and of the greatest patriots of our country.' He then defended the proposed rating franchise, which according to some was to swamp everybody, and which men stood aghast at. With a passing reference to the lodger and county franchises, he proceeded to allude to the Ballot, respecting which he was supposed to have changed his opinion, because he did not mention it at Edinburgh. The call for this measure would be more strong and imperative after a change in the franchise. 'I cannot comprehend,' remarked Mr. Bright, 'why any man should oppose the Ballot. I can understand its importance being exaggerated, but I cannot understand the man who thinks it would be likely to inflict injury upon the country. Every good influence, every legitimate influence, would still exist. The rich man would still be rich and would still be powerful; in the nature of things it must be so. The educated man, the intellectual man, the benevolent man, the man of religious and saintly life, would continue to exercise a most beneficent influ-

ence, which the Ballot, I believe, would not in the slightest degree impair; but the influence of the landlord, of the creditor, of the customer—the influence of the strong and unscrupulous mind over the feeble and the fearful—that influence would be as effectually excluded as I believe it could be by any human contrivance whatsoever.’ From its moral aspect, the question of the Ballot was even still more important, and there was no proposition received with such unanimity as that the Ballot should form a portion of the coming Reform.

Mr. Bright next insisted upon a good redistribution scheme, and proceeded to point out that a real measure of Reform was as much wanted for the security and welfare of the middle classes of society as it was for the operative classes. Many attempts had been made to frighten the middle classes, but all the predictions of the ruling classes as to the effects of progressive measures had been utterly falsified. Touching upon the land laws, and their operation in Scotland, the hon. gentleman asked if there was any reason why land should not be as free as machinery, or ships, or household furniture, or cattle, or the goods and manufactures in the warehouses. He added, however, ‘I am no advocate for a law to force the division of land. I do not want any landlord to be compelled to have a greater or smaller number of tenants; but I say the system of legislation in regard to primogeniture, and to entails and settlements, which is intended to keep vast estates in one hand through successive generations, and to prevent that economical disposition and change of property which is found so advantageous in every other kind of property—I say that this state of things is full of the most pernicious consequences, not only to the agricultural classes, but to all other classes of our countrymen, since all are affected by it.’

Dealing next with affairs of State, Mr. Bright remarked that in our Home affairs we had a very open system of government; but when we came to Foreign policy we were no longer Englishmen; we were no longer free; we were recommended not to inquire. There was, however, the great fact that since 1815 there had been paid in connection with Foreign policy more than £1,000,000,000 out of the industry of the population. And yet there was a supposed

necessity for armaments twice as large as were necessary twenty-five years ago. Governments drifted into war, and the people could not help themselves. He protested against the conduct of public affairs remaining with a few leading families, who enjoyed all the emoluments and all the power. Not until the secret and irresponsible doings of the Foreign Office were placed under the free control of a Parliament elected by the great body of the people of the United Kingdom, would the industry of the people be secured from that gigantic taxation to which it had been subjected during the last hundred and fifty years. Mr. Bright, in concluding, exhorted the people to examine this matter thoroughly for themselves, and sat down with these personal allusions to himself: 'I come amongst you that we may deliberate on those great questions on which our success and our prosperity depend. You know—at least if you do not know it I will tell you—that I am no frequenter of Courts. I have never sought for office or the emoluments of place. I have no craving for popularity. I think I have little of that which may be called the lust for fame. I am a citizen of a free country. I love my country, I love its freedom; but I believe that freedom can only be extended and retained by a fair and honest representation of the people; and it is because I believe this, that I am here to-night to ask you, through the power of your intelligence and your numbers, to step into the position which now opens up before you.'

Early in 1859 Mr. Bright addressed great meetings at Bradford and Rochdale, and then the field of controversy was removed to St. Stephen's. On the 28th of February Mr. Disraeli brought in the Government Reform Bill, which the right hon. gentleman explained was not to alter the limits of the franchise, but to introduce into the boroughs a new kind of franchise founded upon personal property. It was proposed to give votes to persons receiving £10 yearly from the funds, or £20 in pensions, as well as to graduates in the universities, ministers of religion, members of the legal and medical professions, and some other classes. The bill further recognised the principle of identity of suffrage between the counties and the towns, of which the effect would be to add 200,000 to the county constituencies. Lord John Russell complained that the measure did

little or nothing for the working classes, while Mr. Walpole and Mr. Henley retired from the Ministry because the new principle, of a like qualification for counties and boroughs, established in the bill, was utterly at variance with the traditions of the Conservative party. Mr. Bright held that a Government representing a party which had always opposed the extension of political power to the people ought not to have undertaken to settle this question. There were many points in the bill to which he took exception, but chiefly to the total exclusion of the working classes from power. The new franchises were, he said, absurd; they seemed intended merely to make it appear that something was given. Mr. Bright also insisted upon the dissatisfaction that would be created by the withdrawal of their county vote from freeholders in towns. It would have been better if Mr. Disraeli had adhered to the ancient maxims of his party, or had adopted a measure of his opponents, than had introduced a bill which must create anger and disgust throughout the country,—a bill which would disturb everything, irritate vast masses of the people, and settle nothing.

The measure was read a first time, but it was doomed to be wrecked on the second reading. The debate on this stage began on the 20th of March, and was sustained through seven nights. Lord John Russell moved an adverse amendment in a very vigorous speech, concluding with these words: 'With regard to this great question of Reform, I may say that I defended it when I was young, and I will not desert it now that I am old.' Mr. Horsman and others thought the bill could be altered in Committee; and Sir E. Bulwer-Lytton, with much eloquence, pleaded on behalf of the measure, contending that in refusing the compromise offered, the opponents of the Government would plunge the country from end to end into a violent party-battle. Sir Hugh Cairns spoke pointedly of the compact between Lord John Russell and Mr. Bright, and asked whether it included the ballot and a redistribution of seats.

Mr. Bright, whose speeches out of doors had been severely criticised in some quarters, delivered a temperate yet effective speech against the bill. There was a singular unanimity of feeling against the measure, and he was surprised at Mr. Horsman's

suggestion for turning the bill inside-out, seeing that the Government had parted with two eminent colleagues on account of differences on the very points they were discussing. The people understood by a Reform Bill a large enfranchisement, and larger, freer constituencies. The bill did not meet that demand. It got rid of the most independent electors from counties, and insidiously proposed to alter the boundaries of boroughs to complete the work. Yet all that had been done had the object of making the representation of counties more exclusively territorial. 'Is that desirable? Why, the 150 gentlemen elected by the territorial interest have been the chief difficulty in the way of carrying every measure demanded by the country. Ask Lord Lyndhurst, ask Sir James Graham, ask Lord Aberdeen, ask Mr. Disraeli, who in 1852 was turned out because he was forced to meet the demands of his party with regard to the malt-tax. Does any one believe that this is the sort of bill which Mr. Disraeli thinks the best for the country? He knows that this bill in its present shape is a bill framed to satisfy the prejudices, the scruples, the convictions, if you like, and the fears of the 150 country gentlemen who sit behind him.' Mr. Bright described the small boroughs as only a refuge for the politically destitute—a shelter for what are called 'deserving objects.' What would be the effect of the voting-paper system upon small boroughs? 'I know no limit whatever,' said the speaker, 'to the amount of corruption it may occasion.'

With regard to the exclusion of the working classes, Mr. Bright said that the bill told them they were dangerous, and that there were privileges which they ought not to share. The working classes had improved mentally, morally, and physically, and yet the Government told them they were as dangerous and ignorant as they were twenty-seven years ago! Uniformity of franchise had been represented as a democratic proceeding, but as he was not himself very democratic, on that account it had no charms for him. No power could keep the boroughs at £10, and unless the idea of uniformity were given up, the county franchise must come down. Answering the taunt that nobody cared about Reform, Mr. Bright said that there would be agitations during the coming autumn and winter. 'I happen to

have been to some of the largest towns of this country, and I have seen meetings exceeding in number, and exceeding in influence, I believe, almost every meeting that was held by the Anti-Corn-Law League during the agitation for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The populations you are about to disappoint and defy,—what have they done? They have conquered everything they have grappled with hitherto. I do not speak of distant realms conquered under your banners, but of arts and manufactures, and all that tends to wealth and civilisation. Do you think that this population will not also conquer a much larger share of their political rights than in your present mood you appear disposed to give them?’ Next addressing himself to the country gentlemen, Mr. Bright said the men in the North had no fear of the people. Although a violent disturbance would be more damaging to them than to others, a large proportion of the employers of labour were in favour of extending the suffrage, for they believed it would remove discontent, and elevate and strengthen the people. ‘I assure you that resistance is not always conservative,’ he said in conclusion. ‘I profess to be, in intention, as conservative as you,—I believe, infinitely more so, if you look forward twenty or thirty years into the future. Was not Free Trade conservative? And yet you resisted it to the last. I recollect occasions when the Chancellor of the Exchequer told us of the cruelty practised on the ruined and betrayed agriculturist. I recollect he addressed us on the condition of the farm-labourer two or three years afterwards; and since that time his condition has been improving rapidly. Is not prosperity conservative? Is not peace conservative? Any energies I possess I have devoted to their advance; I have endeavoured to stand on the rules of political economy, and to be guided by the higher rules of true morality; and when advocating a measure of Reform larger than some are prepared to grant, I appear in that character, for I believe a substantial measure of Reform would elevate and strengthen the character of our population; that, in the language of the beautiful prayer read here every day, it would tend “to knit together the hearts of all persons and estates within this realm.” I believe it would add to the authority of the decisions of Parliament; and I

feel satisfied it would confer a lustre, which time could never dim, on that benignant reign under which we have the happiness to live.'

Amongst subsequent speakers was Mr. Gladstone, who said he was extremely desirous of seeing this question settled, and that he should give his vote neither to the Government nor to party, when he voted to negative the resolution of Lord John Russell. Mr. Disraeli, in closing the debate, said the Government had been sustained in all its arduous struggles by a conviction of the justice of the people of England; and they were sustained by it at that moment, amid all the manœuvres of Parliamentary intrigue, and all the machinations of party warfare. When the House went to a division, great excitement prevailed on all sides, and this was enhanced when the numbers were announced as follows: For the second reading of the bill, 291; against, 330; majority against the Government, 39.

The Ministry now determined to dissolve Parliament, and to remit the question to the constituencies. An immediate dissolution was pressed for, and Mr. Bright admitted that the Government had taken the constitutional course they were bound to take. But while he applauded the course Ministers had taken, he protested against the attempt of Mr. Disraeli to make a little political capital by representing that the country had the option between his own measure, conservative in its character, and one that was revolutionary. He observed that it was very odd this Conservative bill should have had more determined opponents on the Government side of the House than on the other. For himself, he was not afraid of the tribunal before which the Government were about to bring this question. Any measure of Reform he should propose would be on the lines of that of 1832; and if that were revolutionary, he did not understand the meaning of the term. If the Government made such a charge as this, when they went to the hustings they must take the consequences. He would like to go to this election in a spirit of calmness, and to discuss the question fairly. This attitude was not that of a bigoted partisan on the one hand, or that of one who recoiled from the consequences of his advocacy on the other.

Parliament was prorogued on April 19, but several days before this Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Rochdale, called to promote

the return of Mr. Cobden, who was then in America. Mr. Bright was in high feather on this occasion, and his tribute to Mr. Cobden is worth quoting for several reasons. Mr. Cobden was one of themselves, he said, 'and it was quite likely that his ancestry were seated in one of the English counties at the time of the Norman Conquest, but he never boasted that those ancestors came over here with the Conqueror. He (Mr. Cobden) began by agitating the Anti-Corn-Law question, and they knew what had been the result. He was sent to Parliament, and became a great person in the House—so great that in 1846 Lord J. Russell, who was then about to form an Administration, wrote to him and offered him a seat in his Cabinet. Mr. Cobden, however, did not accept the offer, and went abroad.' Mr. Bright concluded by saying that although he should give Lord John Russell's bill a favourable consideration, he had not given up the thought of bringing in at some future day his own, if he were returned again to Parliament.

Mr. Bright himself was opposed at Birmingham by Mr. T. D. Acland, who in his address said that he had been invited by 'a numerous and respectable body of Liberal electors' to contest the borough. As to the character of the electors who invited Mr. Acland, controversy would now be useless; but history records that he was lamentably mistaken when he went on to observe that he had 'no fear of the result.' Mr. Scholefield, the second recognised Liberal candidate, was a true colleague, and took a very generous estimate of the situation, as well as a magnanimous view of the claims of Mr. Bright. 'It is not,' he said, 'in this case that the Conservatives love me more than Mr. Bright. It is, perhaps, that for certain reasons they dislike me a little less. And this is easily explained. I have not the power, the influence, or the eloquence of Mr. Bright, and of course I am not a man of so much mark. They well know that if they turned me out of the House of Commons to-morrow, they would do little harm to the cause of progress; but if they turned out Mr. Bright, they would level at it a dangerous and deadly blow.'

This self-abnegation on the part of Mr. Scholefield was warmly appreciated. It was well known that the opposition was really aimed



at Mr. Bright's re-election; but the result proved that the electors of Birmingham were not only desirous of endorsing the past action of their illustrious representative, but were well aware as to the nature of the coalition of bastard Liberalism and uncompromising Conservatism arrayed against him. Mr. Bright arrived in Birmingham on the 23d, and at once began his arduous campaign. On the day of his arrival he addressed three meetings, two of them in the open air. In these speeches he spoke chiefly of the iniquity of England engaging in the impending Continental war. On the 25th, a great town's meeting was held in the Town Hall, for the purpose of considering the claims of the candidates for the representation of the borough. The proceedings amounted to a grand demonstration in favour of the sitting members. Mr. Acland and his friends did not attend. Nearly all the men who took part in the public business of Birmingham were present in the orchestra, behind the Mayor.

Mr. P. H. Muntz proposed a resolution to the effect that in the opinion of the meeting Messrs. Scholefield and Bright were fit and proper persons to represent Birmingham in the new Parliament. Mr. Muntz said that Mr. Bright was something more than the member for Birmingham—he was the member for Great Britain. The prolonged cheering which followed this remark showed the estimation in which the junior member was held. Mr. Alderman Lloyd seconded the resolution, remarking that the electors had unanimously chosen Mr. Bright in his absence two years ago. When he asked the question, 'Does Birmingham recant?' the whole audience with one accord shouted a tremendous 'No.'

After Mr. Scholefield had spoken, Mr. Bright stepped forward, and was received with round after round of cheering. Having made some preliminary observations, he said that on the question of Reform their opponents had dragged their anchors—they had abandoned every position which in past times, and until very recently, they had occupied. Their glorious constitution was, under their own hands, going down like old furniture at a Dutch auction. Coming to his opponent, Mr. Bright remarked that the Tory party had sent to some distance, 'I don't know how far, but at all events they go some 150 miles off, and they find a gentleman who for the

last ten years has been entirely secluded from political life. In all probability, and perhaps most unconsciously, they misrepresented to him the state of opinion in Birmingham; they bring him down here, and they trot him out before several of their supporters. I don't mean to say that this horse has been down, or that he is spavined, but at any rate any one reading his speeches—to continue this description of language—comes to the conclusion that he is at best an unbroken 'colt who has never really been in harness. If you ask him questions, you see at once that, with the greatest possible disposition to be amiable, and the same disposition to be liberal, you are asking him questions with which you are altogether familiar, and with which he is altogether unacquainted.' As to the changed attitude of the Conservatives generally on the Reform question, the speaker asked, 'Ought we not to discover the signs of the times—that "the winter of our discontent" is past, and that under the genial sun of more education, more physical comfort, more intelligence amongst the people, the ice is breaking on every side, and even that party who so long insulted the people, and ruled them so long as they dared, and so long as they could, with a rod of iron, is being broken up, and the great popular party is every day becoming more omnipotent in this kingdom?' Success consoling to themselves, and glorious to the country, undoubtedly awaited their efforts. On the question of foreign policy, Mr. Bright added, 'Whatever may be your opinion, whatever the opinion of any class of my countrymen, let it be fairly understood that I am committed irrevocably, so far as I have any influence, to the entire abstention of England from any meddling whatsoever. . . . I value the blood, I value the sweat, I value the comfort, the lives, the homes, the happiness of the people of this country. Never for one single moment, at the behest of power, or at the call of popular frenzy and popular clamour, shall any man be able to charge me with being accessory to a policy which should sacrifice the happiness of the common people on the altar of sanguinary war.' On the motion of Mr. George Edmonds, seconded by Mr. Alderman Baldwin, a resolution of thanks to the retiring members was carried by acclamation.'

The nomination took place on the 28th, amid a scene of extraordinary excitement, the Town Hall being crammed to excess. The enthusiasm was such, that the lungs of the Birmingham electors sustained them for fifteen minutes in cheering Mr. Bright and his colleague. Mr. P. H. Muntz proposed, and Mr. Alderman Lawden seconded, the nomination of Mr. Scholefield; and Mr. Alderman Lloyd proposed, and Mr. G. Edmonds seconded, that of Mr. Bright. Mr. H. Van Wart next nominated Mr. Thomas Dyke Acland, but Mr. Sampson Lloyd, on rising to second the nomination, was met by an indescribable torrent of invective and interruption. He could not secure the attention of the assembly for a single moment. The candidates being called upon, Mr. Scholefield rose first, and was listened to with respect and attention.

When Mr. Bright rose, there was unbounded enthusiasm. He began by some allusions to his opponents, and the ill-starred destiny of their candidate; and coming to his own personal apology, remarked that for sixteen years he had sat in the House of Commons, and during that time there had been no charge brought against him of political inconsistency, of unfaithfulness to his trust, of self-seeking in any way, or of being found at any time a hanger-on of political parties. 'I have had the satisfaction—the high and glorious satisfaction—of being one of those through whose instrumentality was gained the first battle of free industry, by which were proclaimed glad tidings to all the sons of toil, not in England only, but throughout all the world.' He then charged Government with having in the past strangled the industry of the nation, and inveighed strongly against the system of expenditure upon vast armies and navies, &c. The speaker next enlarged upon the inequalities of electoral representation, and afterwards in a very impassioned part of his speech said, 'Let me tell you that, whatever your institutions be, those that exist across the Atlantic or those that exist here, or those that existed awhile ago in France—whatever be the form of your institutions, if you have in your midst 400,000 armed men, whose whole business is war, who are separated to a large extent from citizenship, who don't live at home, but who live under canvas or in barracks, there can be no security,—not ten years', not five

years', not six months' security,—for anything whatsoever that deserves the name of civil liberty.' Having spoken most eloquently against England being dragged into any war at that critical juncture, Mr. Bright thus defended himself on another point: 'There are persons, and there was one in the House of Commons, a Minister of the Crown, who only the other day, I am told, for I did not notice the passage, had the audacity to taunt me, not with having criticised the House of Lords, but with having spoken in disparagement of the Crown of England. Now,' continued the speaker, amid vehement cheering, 'whoever said this, on whatever occasion, I throw the slander in his teeth. The Crown of England will never be jeopardised by a prosperous and contented people.' Subsequently, Mr. Bright once more announced his political position: I am for peace, for retrenchment, and for reform—thirty years ago the great watchwords of the great Liberal party; and whosoever may feel it worth his while to depart from that watchword, to pronounce other Shibboleths, so long as that flag floats, so long at least shall I be found one of the steadfast soldiers under it.' He and such as himself had been the very saviours of the order they were charged with destroying—the aristocracy; but they had come to the time when no institution, however deeply rooted in tradition or sentiment, could dare with impunity and safety to stand against the opinion of the people of this great nation. He had never been an official servant of the Crown; he had sought no such distinction, nor did he seek it now, although it was no small honour; and he concluded with this justifiable boast, 'If I am anything in political life, I strive to be at least a servant of the people and of truth. I have laboured for them; I have spent many of the choicest years, and the chiefest portion of my time, in what I believe was an honest devotion to their cause.'

Mr. Bright never delivered a finer or more telling electioneering speech than this. He was followed by Mr. Acland, who, notwithstanding the appeals of the Liberal candidates on his behalf, could only be heard by the reporters, and by them but very indistinctly. The electors were evidently very impatient of the opposition offered to Mr. Bright's return. Some one hundred and fifty persons only

having held up their hands for Acland, as against the thousands for Scholefield and Bright, a poll was demanded for the former, after the declaration of the Mayor. The temper of the whole town may be best understood from the fact that although Mr. Van Wart, the proposer of Mr. Acland, was a man highly esteemed in Birmingham, and had been the constant friend of liberal and progressive measures, he could not obtain a hearing, but after standing for a quarter of an hour was compelled to sit down and read his speech to the reporters. When the poll was declared on the following day, it became apparent how weak was the coalition on behalf of Mr. Acland. The numbers were: for Mr. Scholefield, 4623; Mr. Bright, 4492; and Mr. Acland, 1569. Mr. Bright was therefore nearly three thousand votes ahead of his opponent. On the same day, Mr. Cobden was elected for Rochdale without opposition.

On the 31st of May, the non-electors of Birmingham entertained the members for the borough at dinner in the Town Hall. Mr. J. A. Langford presided, supported by Messrs. Alderman Lloyd, Charles Sturge, G. Edmonds, and other prominent Liberals. Mr. Bright's speech on the occasion was devoted chiefly to two topics—the franchise, and the war upon the Continent. With regard to the former, he wished to ask those who knew what the non-electors and working men of Birmingham were, what there was so dreadful in them that they should be excluded from the franchise? Whence the terror entertained on that subject by the Newdegates and Spooners, and from what cause did it proceed? The hon. member ridiculed the idea that if the franchise was extended to the present non-electoral bodies it would be the means of sending up men to Parliament bent only on legislating for their own class, or for a class interest. Having dilated upon the many anomalies in the representative system, Mr. Bright adverted to the war then in progress on the Continent—the war between France and Italy and Austria. He had been almost stoned in the streets because he thought and said that the blood of Englishmen should not be poured out to sustain a tottering and decrepid Mohammedan power. But now he found himself not alone on this question. The Queen had issued a proclamation of neutrality; Ministers had announced that such would

be their policy, and they were supported by the newspaper press. The hon. member strongly condemned a warlike spirit and policy, and although they were met in evil times he hoped for better days.

Parliament met on the 31st of May, and the swearing in of members was proceeded with. On the 6th of June an open conference of the Liberal party was held at Willis's Rooms. Great unanimity prevailed, and it was decided to move an amendment to the Address. Lord John Russell and Lord Palmerston stated their readiness to accept office on the basis of progressive measures, and Mr. Bright rendered good service by disclaiming any desire to impose upon the more moderate section of the party advanced opinions for which they were not prepared. He drew, however from Lord John Russell a declaration that his lordship intended to adhere fully to the propositions for electoral Reform stated by him at the close of the preceding Parliament.

On the following day the battle over the Address began in the House of Commons, when the Marquis of Hartington moved the following amendment: 'We beg humbly to submit to your Majesty that it is essential to the satisfactory result of our deliberations, to the securing the success of our councils, and to the facilitating the discharge of the high functions of your Majesty, that your Majesty's Government should possess the confidence of this House and of the country, and we deem it to be our duty respectfully to represent to your Majesty that such confidence is not reposed in your Majesty's present Government.' The debate was very animated. Mr. Disraeli was spirited, humorous, and epigrammatic. He made a strong attack upon Sir James Graham (which that right hon. gentleman afterwards returned with interest), and alluded in amusing terms to the compact which had been entered into at Willis's Rooms.

Mr. Bright gave at length his reasons for supporting the amendment. He did not rise to defend Lord Palmerston, and had no facts to convince him that the Government had not done all in their power to prevent the war now raging in Italy; but as to the neutrality to which the Government had pledged themselves, he wanted to know whether it was real or pretended. The question applied almost entirely to France. The increase of our naval force in the Medi-

terranean, the high bounties offered for enlistment in the navy, and the formation of rifle corps, were not directed against Austria ; and was it not likely, or even inevitable, that these preparations would destroy in the minds of the French Government and people all confidence in our professions of neutrality ? There was no reason to distrust the Emperor of the French ; there was no increased cause of suspicion ; yet in Germany the general opinion was that the Government of England was disposed rather to side with Austria than with France. He did not blame the present Ministers for all this ; but he could not confide in a Government whose neutrality was to be found in continued and gigantic preparations for war. No doubt from the next Government there would be the same professions of neutrality ; but with regard to France, all classes of the people would feel that there would be somewhat more of sympathy towards France on the part of their successors than, as far as he knew, was entertained by the present Government. With regard, however, to the personal alliance between England and France, it did not in his opinion add to the dignity or to the advantage of either nation ; he should prefer a generous and dignified conduct on the part of both Governments to an alliance that seemed to separate them from other nations.

In a passage which created much laughter and cheering, Mr. Bright referred to the sort of bait thrown out by Mr. Disraeli—what the anglers call having a cast—the throwing out of a fly on these benches to see if anybody would rise. But although the Tory party, or the Conservative party, or the Conservative-Liberal party (for the hon. gentlemen opposite had so many *aliases* that he knew not what to call them), had always been ready to receive men of capacity in their ranks, it was only under very stringent conditions. They had cast off Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Gladstone, when those distinguished men had done something most beneficial to the country. But their rancour had done immense harm to their own party, for it had enabled Mr. Disraeli to become their leader. When the amusement which this sally created had subsided, Mr. Bright in few words stated his grounds for the course he was then taking : ‘ I say that the Government has not, upon the rules of Parliamentary practice,

so far as we know, the confidence of the House of Commons. I believe if they were to pursue the course they have taken with regard to European affairs, the neutrality which they profess will not be maintained in practice. And I believe with respect to the question of Reform, which they have done their utmost to damage during the present session, that they will endeavour to betray it in the session which is to come. I think that with a new Government a more friendly feeling with France is likely to be preserved. I think also that we should have laid on the table at an early period a measure of Reform which will be distinct and considerable, and one which it may be the duty of the House and the people to accept.' But his support of any Government would depend upon their measures and their policy.

When the division came to be taken, it was found that the Government were outvoted, the numbers being—For the amendment, 323; against, 310: majority against the Government, 13. The result was received with tremendous cheering. Lord Hartington nominated the Committee, which consisted of the mover and seconder, Lord Palmerston, Lord J. Russell, Mr. Sidney Herbert, and other members. Loud cries were heard for the addition of Mr. Bright's name—the hon. gentleman having contributed probably as much as any one to the downfall of the Government, but it was not added to the list. The House was one of the largest ever known. Out of a total number of 654 members, 637 recorded their votes. Amongst those who gave their votes for the Government were Mr. Gladstone, Lord Elcho, Mr. Cobbett, and Mr. Roebuck.

The Derby Government resigned, and a new Administration was formed, with Lord Palmerston as Premier, Lord John Russell as Foreign Secretary, and Mr. Gladstone as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Mr. Cardwell ultimately became President of the Poor Law Board in the room of Mr. Milner Gibson, who went to the Board of Trade in place of Mr. Cobden, who had been designated for this post, but declined to join the Ministry.

On the 21st of July, on the motion for going into committee of ways and means, Mr. Disraeli raised an important debate on the financial policy of the late Government, which he contended had



been perfectly successful. He criticised his rival's financial scheme, but the most important feature of his speech was a declaration to the effect that no country could continue to raise seventy millions a year, as England was then doing, by taxation in time of peace. A more economical management of the public resources was therefore essential, and to render reductions safe, the Government must diligently prosecute a policy of peace and neutrality. They must abstain from interference in the discussions at the forthcoming European Congress. Mr. Gladstone, in his reply, echoed the sentiment that every effort should be made to preserve and strengthen the friendship between England and France; and he declared himself most anxious to reduce our naval and military armaments, when other nations had given a similar attestation to their pacific promises.

The moment when these two great party leaders were thus in accord naturally seemed an auspicious one to Mr. Bright, and the friends of peace and retrenchment generally. Mr. Bright, following the Chancellor of the Exchequer, accordingly gave utterance to his views on the questions raised with fulness and power. He began by congratulating Mr. Disraeli on having become a convert to the views long advocated by himself and Mr. Cobden, and went on to give a qualified approval of the financial measures of the Government. But on the question of the income tax he strongly expressed his opinion that it should not be made permanent until a distinction was drawn between permanent and precarious incomes. Mr. Bright also described the grievances inflicted upon the trading and commercial community by the unequal operation of the succession duties, and contended that probate should be levied equally upon all kinds of property. Dealing with the enormous growth of our naval and military estimates, he ridiculed with great emphasis our periodical invasion panics, and censured those, whether editors or peers, who used irritating language towards France or the French Emperor. The admission of the Emperor that he was making war against the mind of Europe, and that he made peace because the war was assuming dimensions not consistent with the interests of France, proved that the suspicions as to his future objects were unfounded.

Referring to the new principles upon which war was conducted, Mr. Bright said: 'Success in war no longer depends on those circumstances that formerly decided it. Soldiers used to look down on trade, and machine-making was, with them, a despised craft. No stars or garters, no ribbons or baubles, bedecked the makers and workers of machinery. But what is war becoming now? It depends not, as heretofore, on individual bravery, on the power of a man's nerves, the keenness of his eye, the strength of his body, or the power of his soul, if one may so speak; but it is a mere mechanical mode of slaughtering your fellow-men. This sort of thing cannot last. It will break down by its own weight. Its costliness, its destructiveness, its savagery will break it down; and it remains but for some Government—I pray that it may be ours!—to set the great example to Europe of proposing a mutual reduction of armaments.' The speaker continued that the French believed we were making an outcry about invasion to cover designs of invading them! The Emperor had shown that he desired to ally himself with England. Then why generate suspicions and create alarms? He closed his observations with this strong personal appeal to Lord Palmerston:—

'I am not accustomed to compliment the noble lord at the head of the Government. I have always condemned the policy which I thought wrong, but which, I have no doubt, the noble lord thought was best calculated to promote the interests of the country. I believe he was mistaken, and that he was importing into this century the politics of the last; but I do not think it would be possible to select a Minister who could better carry out a policy which would be just to France, and beneficial to ourselves, than the noble lord. Blood shines more, and attracts the vision of man more, than beneficent measures. But the glory of such measures is far more lasting, and that glory the noble lord can achieve. I live among the people. I know their toils and their sorrows, and I see their pauperism—for little better than pauperism is the lot of vast numbers of our countrymen from their cradles to their graves. It is for them I speak; for them I give my time in this assembly; and in heartfelt sorrow for their sufferings I pray that some statesman may take the steps which I have indicated. He who can establish such a state of things between France and England will do much to promote the future prosperity of two great nations, and will show that eighteen hundred years of Christian professions are at length to be followed by something like Christian practice.'

This speech attracted the attention of the French Emperor and

his Government, and did much towards paving the way for Mr. Cobden's subsequent mission in connection with the Anglo-French Treaty.

During the sessions of 1858-59, in addition to the more important subjects with which we have dealt, several questions of moment arose upon which Mr. Bright addressed the House. In the former year, upon the motion to go into committee on Sir John Trelawny's Church Rates Abolition Bill, an amendment was moved by Mr. Packe for the rejection of the measure. Mr. Bright condemned this motion, seeing that much the same speeches had been made year after year in connection with Church-rates. On the general question, he said that it was in the interest of public honesty, of public morality, of public order, and of religion itself, that he asked the House to abolish this unjust and irritating system. If he were a Churchman, he should be ashamed of hon. members who opposed this bill. They had evidently no faith in their Church. They had no faith in the zeal of their congregations, nor in the arguments or the eloquence of their pastors. They believed their churches would fall into ruin if this bill were to pass. He had never said anything half so severe of the members of the Established Church as that. To every member in the least disposed to assist with this bill, he (Mr. Bright) would say, 'Go with us as far as you can; the further you go, the pleasanter you will find the road; and let us, without further delay, proceed at once with this bill, the fate of which has been irrevocably decided.' The House decided to go into committee on the bill by 346 votes to 104.

One of the features of Mr. Disraeli's budget of 1858 was a proposition for the postponement of the repayment of the Exchequer Bonds. On the 3d of May, when the second reading of the Exchequer Bonds Bill was moved, a discussion arose upon the general financial policy of the Government. Mr. Bright held that the House was trying to do an impossible thing—viz., to make a very heavy taxation easy to bear. That taxation was shifted from shoulder to shoulder, and now it rested upon the masses of the population, whose incomes were small, while their consumption of taxed articles was very large. A great deal of this taxation was





owing to the foreign policy we were pursuing, which he discussed and strongly censured. 'Amity with all nations,' said Mr. Bright, 'justice and courtesy to all, but intimate political alliances with none. That is my policy.' He asked the House, in all seriousness, whether, instead of going on for the next five years as they had for the last five,—building vast ships which all good men hoped would never be used, and which all sensible men knew were not necessary for the purposes of our security,—it would not be better to ask the French Government, 'Is it not possible to relieve your Exchequer and our Exchequer, to relieve your people and our people, from the pressure of this vast taxation, which we are constantly compelled to wring from them?' But instead of this, the cry of 'Give, give,' was repeated every session in respect of the army and the navy. 'I do not like the income tax,' continued the hon. member, 'any more than you do, but I know it is the duty of Parliament either to diminish our expenditure or to maintain the income tax, or some other tax of that kind; and that, as we acted in a foolish spirit in involving ourselves in this expenditure, so we are now acting a cowardly and immoral part in casting off the burden of expense from our shoulders, partly upon the great body of consumers now living, but mostly upon our posterity coming after us.'

Mr. Bright held strong views upon the war with China, and on the 4th of June 1858, he took the opportunity of saying that had he been in the House when the China question was debated in the preceding year, he should have agreed entirely with Mr. Cobden. If an insult had been offered to England in connection with the *lorcha Arrow*, and if the Government felt bound to adopt the policy of Sir John Bowring, the power of England was amply sufficient to vindicate the honour of England without entering into complicated arrangements with other Powers. Who knew that the objects of France and England in China were the same? With regard to the effects of the hostilities, the last war did nothing to facilitate commercial relations with China, and the war in which they were then engaged would do no more. He made an appeal to the Government to face the question boldly, and bring the hostilities to a close. A few days later, during a discussion on the national defence, Mr.

Bright demanded to know what was the precise amount of expenditure, or of force by land and sea, which was required in order to enable us to say that this country was completely defended. Such questions as that of the public expenditure were not questions of aristocracy or democracy, nor questions of Conservatism or Radicalism; they were questions of the obvious interests of our country, and of humanity at large. He hoped the House and the nation would sustain the Government in every effort they might make to restore our foreign relations to a state of tranquillity and safety, so that we might turn our attention again to that from which we had been diverted for the last five years—viz., the process of reducing the expenditure, in order, if possible, to render England a country which all Englishmen should prefer, rather than one from which they had incessant inducements to emigrate to every other part of the globe.

On the 17th of August 1859, a *soirée* was given at Rochdale to Mr. Cobden, who had now returned from America. The member for Rochdale gave his reasons for not joining the Palmerston Government. Mr. Bright passed a high eulogium upon his friend, and then said, 'Our people have been patient in suffering, they have been heroic in their labours and in their struggles; and I count the ambition to be in public life an ambition of a low and worthless kind if it be not the ambition to devote every faculty we possess to the true interests and permanent welfare and real elevation of the great and noble people which we go to Parliament to represent.' On the evening following, both members addressed a great mass meeting, dealing chiefly with the Reform question.

At Huddersfield, on the 9th of September ensuing, a banquet was given by the Liberals of that borough to celebrate the return to Parliament of Mr. E. A. Leatham, Mr. Bright's brother-in-law. Mr. Bright reviewed the course of recent legislation, and expressed his disappointment over the many wasted sessions which he had witnessed. He was so distressed and so weary—sometimes so disgusted and so hopeless—that he felt a strong inclination to retire from Parliament. All that had been done of late years was to vote with listless apathy millions of money for which the people had

toiled. On the 1st of December, Mr. Bright attended a *soirée* given by the Liverpool Financial Reform Association, in the Philharmonic Hall. In the course of a long and animated address, the hon. gentleman said: 'I ask that the Parliament may be made the real representative of the property, the industry, and the intelligence of the nation,—that we may be delivered, if possible, from chaotic legislation, from reckless expenditure, and from taxation oppressive, unequal, and unjust. The monopolists of power reject this demand with scorn. The day will come when it will be made in a louder voice than mine—when this question will be grasped by a ruder hand than mine; and when it is so made, as was the case in 1832, that for which reason and justice now plead in vain, will be surrendered amid terror and humiliation.'

At a Reform Conference held at the Guildhall Coffee House, London, on the 7th of December, in this same year, a resolution was unanimously passed, thanking Mr. Bright for his labours in connection with Parliamentary Reform, and highly approving of his bill upon the subject. A second resolution demanded a large extension of the suffrage, redistribution, an assimilation of the electoral laws of England, Scotland, and Ireland, the repeal of the Septennial Act, and the Ballot. Mr. Bright said that, in the event of the failure of the Government, he should be prepared to introduce his own bill, which was now in so perfect a state that it could be brought in any night.

But although everything promised well at this juncture for the cause of Reform, the hopes built upon an early settlement of the question were doomed to be frustrated by a variety of events. When at length Reform could no longer be postponed, the measure, though largely moulded by Mr. Bright and his friends, was initiated by that party which, from the passing of the Act of 1832, had resolutely set itself against a liberal extension of the franchise.



## CHAPTER XVII.

*THE FRENCH TREATY AND FOREIGN QUESTIONS.*

Foreign Questions.—The Emperor Napoleon and the Anglo-French Treaty.—Effect of Mr. Bright's Speech.—Mr. Cobden's Negotiations.—The Treaty signed.—Mr. Gladstone's Budget of 1860.—Details of the French Treaty.—Tribute to Mr. Cobden.—Debates upon the Budget and the Treaty.—Mr. Bright defends the Government Scheme.—The Treaty approved.—Mr. Bright on the Policy of the French Emperor.—The Annexation of Savoy.—Mr. Bright's attitude on this question.—England and China.—Debate on the War.—Mr. Bright on Government Policy.—He severely condemns the Wars with China.—Financial Affairs of India.—Foreign Invasion Panic in 1860.—Increased Fortifications.—Powerful Speech by Mr. Bright.—The Disturbances in Syria.—Mr. Bright on the Support of Turkey.—Mazzini and Mr. Stansfeld.—Mr. Bright defends the Member for Halifax.—Scene between Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Bright.

**B**ETWEEN the years 1860 and 1864, inclusive, several important questions affecting our foreign policy were discussed in Parliament; and in the debates which arose in the Lower House Mr. Bright took a conspicuous part. Foremost amongst these questions was the negotiation of the French Treaty. Mr. Bright, who was in perfect accord with Mr. Cobden both as regards the reduction of our national expenditure and the advantages which must accrue from the conclusion of an Anglo-French Treaty, did much by the speech which he delivered in July 1859, on the financial policy of the Derby Government, to hasten the work afterwards successfully completed by Mr. Cobden. As we have seen, he expressed his belief that the thirty-six millions of Frenchmen engaged in the honest occupations of their country, were as anxious for perpetual peace with England as the most intelligent

and Christian Englishman could be for a perpetual peace with France. The Emperor himself was, also, equally anxious to remain at peace with this country. There were great restrictions on the commerce between the two countries, which interfered with that free intercourse that should subsist between them, and these ought not to be allowed to remain; and he (Mr. Bright) strongly counselled the abolition of such restrictions.

The great difficulty was, that the French Emperor could not cope with the monopolists of his own country. If he could offer to his nation thirty millions of the English people as customers, that would give him an irresistible power to make changes in the French tariff which would be as advantageous to England as they would be to France. Mr. Bright believed that if that were honestly done—done without any diplomatic finesse, and without obstacles or conditions being attached to it which would make its acceptance impossible—it would bring about a state of things which history would pronounce to be glorious.

This speech was read by M. Michel Chevalier, the great French economist, who wrote to Mr. Cobden urging him to come to Paris in the belief that the Emperor would be willing to negotiate a commercial treaty with England. Mr. Cobden, at the close of the session, went to Paris, had several conversations with his friend M. Michel Chevalier, and was speedily engaged in personal communications with the Emperor, who showed equal intelligence and honesty on this question. M. Rouher, the French Minister, was enabled to commence negotiations, and through several months they went on, interfered with by many obstacles, but by no obstacles in France so great—as Mr. Bright said upon a subsequent occasion—as by some of those which came from this country. But finally the Treaty was signed, and Mr. Cobden at length saw achieved the second great triumph of his life.

On the 10th of February 1860, Mr. Gladstone introduced his Budget, embodying the provisions of the French Treaty. In the outset, the Chancellor of the Exchequer referred to the circumstances which made the present a memorable year in British finance—the relief of £2,146,000 from payment of interest on the National Debt;

the lessening of war duties on tea and sugar; the expiry of the period for which the income-tax was voted, and the new commercial treaty with France. The charges for the ensuing year he estimated at £70,000,000, and the income at £60,700,000; the deficiency to be made up partly by a renewal of the tea and sugar duties as they now stood for fifteen months, and partly through the operations of the new French Treaty, which he recommended the House to adopt. 'France,' said Mr. Gladstone, 'engaged to reduce the duties on English coal and coke, flax, and pig-iron, in 1860. On the 1st of October 1861, France would reduce duties and take away prohibitions on British productions mentioned, so that there should not be an *ad valorem* duty of over 30 per cent. There was a provision that the maximum of 30 per cent. should, after a lapse of three years, be reduced to a maximum of 25 per cent. England engaged, with a limited power of exception, to abolish immediately and totally all duties on manufactured goods; to reduce the duty on brandy from 15s. to 8s. 2d.; on wine from 5s. 10d. to 3s.; with power reserved to increase the duty on wine, if we raised our duty on spirits. England engaged to charge upon French articles subject to excise the same duties which the manufacturer would be put to in consequence of the changes. The Treaty was to be in force for ten years.'

Mr. Gladstone then paid a well-merited tribute to Mr. Cobden. He said that he could not help expressing his obligation to him for the labour he had, at no small personal sacrifice, bestowed upon a measure which Mr. Cobden, not the least among the apostles of Free Trade, believed to be one of the greatest triumphs of Free Trade ever accomplished. 'It is a great privilege for any man who, having, fifteen years ago, rendered to his country one important and signal service, now enjoys the singular good fortune of having it in his power—undecorated, bearing no mark of rank or of title from his Sovereign, or from the people—to perform another signal service in the same cause for the benefit of, I hope, a not ungrateful country.'

Mr. Disraeli moved an amendment to the effect that the House should not go into committee on the Customs Act until it should

have considered and assented to the French Treaty; but this was rejected by 293 to 230. On the 21st, however, another debate upon the Budget was raised on Mr. Ducane's motion, 'That this House, recognising the necessity of providing for the increased expenditure of the coming financial year, is of opinion that it is not expedient to add to the existing deficiency by diminishing the ordinary revenue, and is not prepared to disappoint the just expectations of the country by re-imposing the income-tax at an unnecessarily high rate.'

Mr. Bright spoke upon both these motions. Referring to Mr. Disraeli's resolution, he said he could not discern its real object or purpose. If he sat on the other side of the House, instead of carping at the Treaty and making it the stalking-horse of party, he would attack it in a manly way. He was of opinion that the Government had taken the right course; but say that their policy was bad, the Treaty bad, and the Budget bad; let the course taken be a straightforward one; let an explicit resolution be brought forward, and the question discussed upon its merits.

In the debate on Mr. Ducane's motion, Mr. Bright expressed at length his views upon the Treaty and the Budget generally. Rising after Sir F. Baring, whose speech was of a somewhat pessimist character, he said that that speech came from a mind which clung very much to the past, and entertained doubts with regard to the future. Every part of it held up some hobgoblin to prevent them from pursuing the course which since 1842 had proved most wise. The country approved the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposals, and the motion, which was a fair one, went to defeat the whole scheme, to reject the Budget and the Treaty, and to overthrow the Government. The result of this would be a new budget, indirect taxes, and at the same time an estrangement from France, which he thought would be very unfortunate.

Mr. Bright then happily illustrated his opinion of the Treaty by this reference to the writings of Mr. Disraeli:—

'In one of the many books which the right hon. gentleman has written, partly for the instruction and perhaps more for the amusement of his countrymen, he described the mode of living of an English nobleman of great wealth in Paris. He says:

"Lord Monmouth's dinners at Paris were celebrated. It was generally agreed that they had no rival. Yet there were others who had as skilful cooks; others who for equal purposes were as profuse in their expenditure. What was the secret of his success? His lordship's plates were always hot—(a laugh);—whereas in Paris, in the best-appointed houses and at dinners which for costly materials and admirable art in preparation cannot be surpassed, the effect is considerably lessened by the fact that every person at dinner is served with a cold plate. The reason of a custom, or rather a necessity, which one would think a nation so celebrated for their gastronomic tastes would better regulate, is, that the French porcelain is so inferior that it cannot endure the ordinary heat for dinner." Now the right hon. gentleman, with an instinct which we cannot too much admire, breaks out into something like an exclamation. He says: "Now, if we had only had that commercial treaty with France which has been so often on the point of completion, and the fabrics of our unrivalled potteries were given in exchange for their capital wines, the dinners of both nations would be improved; England would gain a delightful beverage, and the French (for the first time in their lives) would dine off hot plates."—(Laughter.) And he concludes with an expression which I recommend to his devoted followers: "An unanswerable instance of the advantages of commercial reciprocity!" (Great laughter.)

It was objected to the Treaty, Mr. Bright continued, that the advantage was all on the side of France; but he contended that, on the face of the Treaty, concession for concession, the French gave to us at least five times as much as we gave to them; and that when the Treaty came into force, our trade with France, which was now almost *nil*, would rank her with some of our best customers. A phantom of an argument had been raised on the subject of coal, but this question, with regard to the navy of France, was a mere bagatelle. The whole of the coal required by the French navy was only 150,000 tons. He made all allowances for the Emperor of the French on the ground that he had to deal with an obstinate Protectionist party, there being 'Chowlers' in France as well as in England. But the Treaty, he observed, was but a part of the scheme of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, who proposed to reduce and simplify the Tariff, and to abolish the hated excise upon paper; and he asked the opponents of the Budget whether 1d. or 2d. or 3d. in the pound income-tax was too much to pay for the great good which the country would receive from it. The scheme carried out the policy of Sir Robert Peel; the effects of that policy had been seen and felt, and no one now denied that it was a wise one.

But while thus defending the Treaty, the Budget, and the relaxa-

tions of the Tariff, Mr. Bright said he was not unmindful of one great blot in the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. This was the frightful, the scandalous expenditure. He ridiculed the notion that there was any ground for apprehension of evil designs by France, and asked why it was, with professions of perfect amity on our part, and a commercial treaty, there should be so vast an increase in our estimates. It was a wonderful inconsistency, or a great and fatal hypocrisy, and somebody must be guilty of an immorality, the darkness of which he wanted words to describe. There was no rock on which so many dynasties had foundered as the rock of reckless and needless expenditure. Concluding by speaking of Mr. Gladstone's scheme as a whole, Mr. Bright said, 'It extends the hand of friendship, not to a government only, but to a great nation across the Channel. Amid the much darkness of Europe, it is a spot of light, and opens to humanity a prospect

"Bright as the breaking East, as midday glorious."

I think it a great measure of justice to England, a great measure of friendship to France; and I am convinced that, acting and working through the means of these two great nations, it will be found hereafter to be a great measure of mercy to mankind.'

In the end, on Mr. Ducane's motion, the Government had a majority of 116, in a House of 562 members. Mr. Gladstone's propositions, with the French Treaty, were afterwards adopted, and an address to the Crown was carried approving the Treaty.

About this time Mr. Bright attended the annual meeting of the Lancashire Reformers' Union, held in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester. He again alluded to the groundless fears of the French, observing that France was made the raw-head and bloody bones of 1793, turning the people from the consideration of their own affairs. We must be careful that it had no such effect in our day. But when he saw measures being taken—happily frustrated just now—which were the exact counterpart of the policy of 1793, he wished for a moment to dwell on this point. As to the steps by which Louis Napoleon became ruler of France, no one had now a right to quarrel with him on that score, for he was con-

gratulated by the then Foreign Minister, now Prime Minister of this country, almost immediately after; and when he came to England he was received with every demonstration of amity by the Sovereign, and of enthusiasm by the people.

Having sketched the foreign policy of the Emperor of the French, and shown where it had been in accord with that of England, Mr. Bright added: 'I say that Louis Napoleon, judging by what appears in the papers, and what one knows beside, has done all he can to accommodate his policy to that of England; whether it be in Italy—where you sympathise with freedom, or in the distant empire of China—where you have no right as a Power to be carrying on war,—whether in the right in Europe or in the wrong in China, you find the policy of the French Government most anxious to square itself with the policy of England.

'And now, after all these alarms, after all these sulphurous leading articles, after all those specimens of wretched oratory poured out by speakers at rifle meetings, after a succession of stimulating letters from the Secretary at War, and hints that you don't know what that man over the water is going to do;—after all those things, the man over the water is receiving one of your citizens (Mr. Cobden)—discussing the great questions of commerce and peace—not matters about which your diplomatists generally concern themselves—receiving information, considering what would be advantageous to the great nation over which he rules, what would be advantageous to the world of which France and England form so great a part; and you find him propounding, in a letter which deserves to be written in letters of gold, a new commercial policy for France. I venture to say that for centuries to come, if the policy marked out be adopted, a blessed renown will be attached to the name of the Third Napoleon which will eclipse all that sanguinary glory which encircles the name of the first of the dynasty.' At the mention of Mr. Cobden's name in this speech, the whole assembly rose, and cheered enthusiastically.

The annexation of Savoy was a question of great interest in the session of 1860, and it was one upon which Mr. Bright expressed himself very emphatically. On the 2d of March Sir Robert Peel

asked the Government for certain explanations respecting the policy of the Emperor of the French. Before Lord John Russell gave them, Mr. Bright interposed, and said, 'I don't want the Government to give the slightest countenance to this transfer, nor do I want them, on the other hand, to give the slightest opposition to it. The opposition, if you give it, must be futile; you cannot prevent the transference of Savoy, but you may, if you like, embroil Europe, and bring England into collision with France. I say, Perish Savoy—though Savoy, I believe, will not perish or even suffer—rather than that we, the representatives of the people of England, should involve the Government of this country with the people and the Government of France in a matter in which we have really no interest whatever.' He begged the House, in the name of common sense and in the interests of England, to regard this question calmly and dispassionately. 'If these two kingdoms (France and Sardinia) have agreed on the transfer, and the people of Savoy themselves are favourable to it, I say it is contrary to the interests of England, and to the honour of the English Government, to pretend to interpose against a transaction which, though I would never have recommended or promoted it, is yet, I am sure, not worth the imposition of a single tax on Englishmen, or the expenditure of a single drop of blood for one moment to prevent it.'

Mr. Bright was subjected to great abuse in some quarters for the attitude he took upon this matter, although it was one which subsequent events fully justified. The question came up many times in the course of the session, and on the 2d of March Lord John Russell detailed the policy of the English Government in connection therewith. At a later date in the same month, viz., the 26th, Mr. Horsman initiated a discussion upon the subject by making a severe attack upon the French Emperor and the policy of our own Ministers. Lord John Russell defended the Government, and was followed by Mr. Bright, who said that the members who had so frequently introduced this question to the House had entirely avoided what was the most important point, viz., the clear and direct interest the House and the country had in the matter under discussion. He contended for the interests of England. There



was one reason why England should rather be glad of the transfer of Savoy to France. Sardinia agreed to the transfer as a compensation to France; and it was perhaps better that the score should be settled in this manner than that for the future Sardinia should consider herself greatly indebted to France, and bound up in a perpetual political alliance with that country. Discussing the position of Austria, Mr. Bright asked whether the gentlemen opposite thought that the Austrian Government would join in a quarrel about Savoy when they had not a word to say when Austria was dismembered? As to Russia, was there any man idiot enough to suppose that the Russian Government would step out of its tranquil path to join us upon a miserable question like this, remembering the course we took with regard to Russia seven years ago? Prussia, too, though for many reasons disposed to side with England, had no interest in this question, and did not desire to take any steps with us.

Coming then to England, who amongst us was interested in this matter? There was a portion of the press which vituperated everything connected with the French people and the French Government; and he (Mr. Bright) suspected it was with the object of supporting a family who, when in power, were not able to maintain themselves in France, and who had no claim on the strength or influence of England to replace them in the position they had lost. He did not believe that the House was alarmed about the matter. Europe had given the question up, and it seemed that England had also given it up. The House of Commons was willing to give it up, and the only persons who were in a state of trepidation were the hon. and learned member for Bridgewater (Mr. Kinglake), the right hon. member for Stroud (Mr. Horsman,) and one or two others. If Mr. Horsman wanted to make war on the Treasury Bench, he should not begin his assaults when the Treasury Bench was in the right. 'With regard to the main question at issue,' continued Mr. Bright, 'I am against the House putting itself in the humiliating position which it is invited to take up, and barking where it does not intend to bite, and making itself, not the guardian of the affairs of Europe, for that would be foolish

and impossible, but making itself the common scold of all Europe. The noble lord will truckle to no Power in Europe, I am sure ; but let him so conduct the foreign policy of this country that all the nations of Europe shall say, what, I believe, they have not heretofore said, that England is a Power regarding her own great interests mainly, not interfering in Europe when it can be avoided, and, when interfering, doing so, not for the sake of exalting one Power and degrading another, but in favour of those great principles of justice and moderation which are necessary in the transactions of the great Powers if the peace of Europe is to be preserved.'

It is scarcely necessary to add that the cession of Savoy and Nice to France was completed during the year, the provinces themselves voting by an enormous majority in favour of annexation.'

The relations between England and China occupied the attention of Parliament during the session of 1860 ; and on the 16th of March, when the Government proposed to take a vote of credit on account of the China war, Sir De Lacy Evans proposed the following amendment : 'That humbly participating in the wish of Her Majesty, expressed in her most gracious speech on the opening of this session of Parliament—namely, that she will be gratified if the prompt acquiescence of the Emperor of China in the moderate demands which have been made upon him by the allies shall obviate the necessity for the employment of force—this House is of opinion that the moderation of policy thus indicated on the part of Her Majesty and that of her ally the Emperor of the French, will best contribute to diminish expenditure, avert complications, and to promote commerce, the interests of justice, and the establishment of peace.' Lord John Russell, in reply, said that no one could regret more than he did the necessity for this expedition ; but the persons and property of our trades must be secured, and he thought that our Minister in China should have the power not only of going to but of residing at the capital. He considered that we were also entitled to an indemnity.

Mr. Bright expressed his disappointment at Lord John Russell's statements. On occasions of this nature, it was the duty of the Minister for Foreign Affairs to be a little more explicit. The

hon. member then traced the progress of the transactions in China from the war which was commenced, he affirmed, by the indiscretion of Sir J. Bowring; and after blaming the stipulations of the last treaty, he contended that, in the proceedings for the ratification of that treaty, we were as much in the wrong as we were at Canton, under the management of Sir J. Bowring. He denied that the Chinese were open to the charge of treachery; he insisted that the collision at the mouth of the Peiho was attributable to the folly and imbecility of our own Minister and the indiscretion of the Admiral; and he censured the Government for allowing a person so utterly unfit to conduct the negotiations as Mr. Bruce to continue to be our Minister in China. He could see no advantage to this country in requiring that our Minister should reside at Peking, which would inflict a grievous insult upon the Emperor of China, and be an ungenerous act on our part.

Further, Mr. Bright warned the Government against a partnership with another power, and against making demands upon the Government of China which, being based only upon a disaster occasioned by the folly of our own Minister, we ought not in the sight of God or man to make. 'Looking back upon our transactions with China during the last few years, I believe nothing more vicious can be found in our history; no page of our annals is more full of humiliation, because full of crime, than that on which is recorded our transactions with China; and because I feel this—because I wish the Government to live and prosper—because I wish this House to stand in honour before the country—because I wish the country to hold a position of repute and morality before the world, therefore it is I warn the Government and this House against proceeding with a policy which no man here can say in his conscience is not a policy conducted in defiance of the laws of Heaven, and those principles of justice without which human society itself cannot be held together.'

No division was taken on the motion, but in the course of the evening the House voted in Committee of Supply a sum of £850,000 on account of the intended expedition. The whole war involved an expenditure of several millions.

The affairs of China were also fully discussed in the session of

1864, when Mr. Cobden made a powerful attack upon the policy of the Government. In accordance with the doctrines which he had always consistently maintained in regard to foreign policy, the member for Rochdale strongly objected to the intervention of England in the civil war between the Imperialists and the Taepings. On the 31st of May, therefore, Mr. Cobden moved a resolution declaring that the policy of non-intervention by force of arms in the internal political affairs of foreign countries, which we professed to observe in our relations with the states of Europe and America, should be observed in our intercourse with the empire of China. The hon. member said that China was the only foreign country where we had systematically endeavoured to force a trade by violence and war; and, curiously enough, it was the only country which formed an exception to the general progress that was apparent everywhere else. In about twenty years we had had three wars with China, the object of which was to open up, as it was called, trade with that country; but the result had been that, whenever there was a war, our merchants, stimulated by anticipations of extended markets, sent out large quantities of produce, and reaped nothing but disappointment, collapse, and reaction. He recommended the appointment, early in the following session, of a Select Committee to inquire into our commercial relations with China and Japan.

Lord Palmerston, in reply, said that the object of England in establishing herself at the Treaty ports was not to obtain territory. All she wanted was a basis for her commerce, and this could not be obtained as long as there were hordes of revolutionists congregated in their neighbourhood. The policy which England had pursued had been eminently successful; and as we had now entered into friendly relations with the central Government of China, he was persuaded that those relations were not likely to be shaken, and that our interests in China would every year increase.

Mt. Bright remarked that, looking back over the past thirty years, there was, perhaps, no portion of our annals of which we ought to be less proud than of those connected with our relations with China. The Government of Lord Palmerston had brought everything Chinese into such inextricable confusion that it was

hardly worth while to make any attempt to get them out of it. From the debate of that evening he came to the conclusion that, with two or three exceptions only, the House universally condemned the policy that had been pursued. Lord Palmerston had attempted to persuade the House that the trade with China—the most miserable trade in the world when compared with the magnitude of the population—was of so great importance to the working classes of this country, that it was worth while to indulge in the policy he had carried on, and to encounter the great expenses which had been incurred. Now he (Mr. Bright) ventured to say that our trade with China—speaking of our exports from England to China for many years back—he believed for thirty years—had not left one single farthing of profit, if we paid out of it the cost of the wars, of the intermeddling, and of the military and naval forces now permanently established there. ‘It is a monstrous folly,’ said Mr. Bright, ‘that the population of this country, so hard toiling and so suffering in comparison with us who are here, as millions of them are, should be taxed year after year to carry on a policy which for thirty years has covered us with discredit, and has wholly failed; and that this policy should be carried on only to please a curious crotchet which the noble lord at the head of the Government has taken upon it—a crotchet which is not participated in, I believe, by a single member of his Cabinet, which this House is willing wholly to repudiate, and which, I believe, in every society in England where the question is discussed receives the same condemnation which it has received in Parliament to-night.’ He hoped that the noble lord would now, when he saw the entire failure of his plans and prophecies, for once come to the conclusion that he was not infallible, and allow good sense and wisdom, rather than violent prejudices, to sway his policy for the future.

Having attained his object by the discussion upon his motion, Mr. Cobden now withdrew it.

On the financial affairs of India, and the recall of Sir Charles Trevelyan, Mr. Bright had something to say in the session of 1860. It appears that Mr. James Wilson, having been appointed financial member of the Legislative Council of India, had developed a scheme

of retrenchment and taxation, which he propounded in the Council at Calcutta, and which was generally received with approval both in India and England. Sir C. Trevelyan, however, the new Governor of Madras, took an opposite view, regarding Mr. Wilson's projects as very injurious, if not impracticable. The Governor's hostility became so marked that it threatened to create great difficulties, and seriously to impede the success of the projected financial reform. The Home Government were accordingly driven to order the immediate recall of the Governor. On the 11th of May, Mr. Danby Seymour raised a debate in the House of Commons upon Sir C. Trevelyan's recall by a series of questions. The Indian Secretary, Sir C. Wood, said that without discussing Sir C. Trevelyan's Minute—which he admitted to be a most excellent and able document—the Government could not pass over his very improper act in publishing it. It was an act of insubordination—an act subversive of all authority—the mutiny of one Governor against another.

Mr. Bright followed, observing that the question was one of a somewhat painful character, and he quite understood the difficulty in which Sir C. Wood was placed. He had considered the Budget of Mr. Wilson, and did not deny its ability, but the fault he found with it was that it proposed to balance income and expenditure by proposing new taxes. Sir C. Trevelyan was strongly of opinion that Mr. Wilson's scheme was not a wise one for his Government, and that it was not necessary to raise new taxes, but that the balance might be effected by reducing expenditure; and he wrote a most able Minute, which showed him to be more of a statesman than the authors of the Calcutta scheme. But the question was as to the course taken by him in publishing his Minute. This course was most unusual, and contrary to official etiquette, and he could not join Mr. Seymour in condemning Sir C. Wood. Mr. Bright argued, nevertheless, that this was a case which proved to the House—and ought to prove to the gentlemen on the Treasury Bench—that, as he had frequently insisted, it would be far better to have five or six separate Governments in India, and that the laws to be passed should be passed by each Government for each Presidency, with reference to its own condition and its own wants. As to the with-

drawal of Sir C. Trevelyan from Madras, it would be deeply regretted: though no a judicious subordinate, he had proved himself a wise Governor, and he (Mr. Bright) hoped Sir C. Wood would study his Minute with care, as it would enable him to modify and greatly improve the project of legislation proposed at Calcutta.

Several other members having spoken, and Lord Palmerston having concurred in the general tribute to Sir C. Trevelyan, the discussion terminated.

A very important question, bearing upon foreign policy, arose in the session of 1860 in connection with the fortifications and works of this country. On the 23d of July Lord Palmerston explained the intentions of the Government with respect to the recommendations of the National Defence Commission for fortifying the dock-yards, and establishing a central dépôt for arms and stores. He proposed that a vote be taken in the meantime for £2,000,000, to be charged on the Consolidated Fund, and raised by annuities for a term not exceeding thirty years. The total outlay, it was expected, would be eleven or twelve millions. Mr. Bright said that during his seventeen years' experience in that House he had never known an instance of a question of such magnitude and importance brought before it without notice, and of such a resolution being proposed for adoption on the same evening. In all probability the proposition would involve an expenditure of twice £12,000,000; and he protested against being entrapped or cajoled into such a resolution.

But a large majority in the House, as well as a large party in the country, were at this time filled with fears of a possible foreign aggression. France, it was said, had a far greater force under arms than she required for the purpose of defence; and she was not strengthening herself upon land alone. The utmost exertions were being made to create a navy almost equal to our own, which could not be required for the defence of France, but which furnished the means of transporting in a few hours a large military force to our shores. Such were the arguments which led to the foreign invasion panic in this country, and to the proposed enormous expenditure upon our fortifications.

The debate upon Lord Palmerston's resolution was adjourned,

and on its being resumed on the 2d of August, Mr. Lindsay moved the following amendment: 'That, as the main defence of Great Britain against aggression depends on an efficient navy, it is not now expedient to enter into a large expenditure on permanent land fortifications.

The chief feature in the debate which ensued was a long and remarkable speech by Mr. Bright. This address, which occupies some twenty-eight columns of *Hansard*, is amongst the most powerful and able of his Parliamentary orations. Certainly, on the question of public expenditure and our relations with France, he has never spoken more eloquently. Mr. Bright began by saying that he had intended to move an amendment himself to Lord Palmerston's resolution, but as Mr. Lindsay had preceded him with an amendment having the same effect, he would not now move his own amendment, but address the House upon that already before it. Addressing himself next to the main subject, he said the House would deceive itself if it supposed that the estimate of the Government as to the cost of these works could be relied upon. Whenever the Government undertook any work, the estimate was never adhered to,—the expenditure was doubled before the work was completed; and he had no doubt that, if the House voted the carrying out of these works to completion, the expenditure would be at least £20,000,000. Millions more would be involved; there must be an increase of the standing army, and the works would be useless without soldiers to man them. He wanted to know by whom this expenditure was urged; was it by an united Cabinet? As to the military authorities, he remarked: 'I have looked into their recommendations, and I confess I am amazed at the absolute stupidity—(laughter)—yes, stupidity; if you want a word less offensive, I would say the absolute lunacy—(laughter)—of the military authorities in regard to this question.' Sir Robert Peel had said in 1850 that if you adopt the opinions of military men on all points of national security, you would overwhelm the country with taxes in time of peace.

Mr. Bright went on to consider the various means of defence which had been suggested, and said he was not one of those who thought that, in considering what means of defence we had, it might



not be very advantageous to have a large volunteer force instead of an enormous standing army. Switzerland and the United States had a volunteer force for their defence. He next quoted the opinions of Mr. Valentine Baker, Colonel Jebb, Sir Robert Gardiner, and Lieut.-Gen. Kennedy, who had written upon this subject of fortifications. Some of them proposed systems more economical than that of the Government; and one believed that £20,000,000 would not be sufficient for additional fortifications, while for the pay of a numerically adequate army and navy, an annual increase of £4,000,000 upon the present estimates was necessary. There was a good deal before us if we embarked in this undertaking. A writer in the *United Service Magazine* showed how lamentably deficient we were as regarded the navy, while an eminent French military critic, M. Brialmont, said that England required an 'augmentation of the permanent army, and the creation of a grand strategical pivot in the south and in the neighbourhood of London.'

The hon. gentleman then examined the report which had been presented to the House, describing it as incoherent, illogical, and absurd. He believed that if the follies and superstitions of the Foreign Office could be got rid of, we might save three-fourths of our military expenditure, and that whatever was necessary for internal defence might be had at little expense from the volunteers. Reviewing the opinions and suggestions of the military authorities upon this question, accompanying the survey by a sarcastic running commentary, he asked the Committee whether there was any other thing they were prepared to undertake upon such counsel, than which nothing, he declared, could be more confused. There was an extraordinary spirit abroad in this matter.

'It is precisely the same sort of delusion as that of a person who always imagines he is going to be poisoned. I know a case where a gentleman imagines that at any hotel he enters they want to give him bread that is poisoned. One day he went to that beautiful hotel at Derby. "Did you not observe," said he, "the bread they gave me?" "No." "What! did you not observe it was poisoned?" "No." "Why, wherever I go, I find the bread they give me is always poisoned." So it is with the gentlemen who argue this question. The ships and the men are everywhere with them, ready to come over upon us, though nobody can ever find them in the condition they are described to be in. It is no use to argue with them. The idea has got into their heads, just as it got into the head of that unfortunate lunatic; and we find ourselves just as unable to eradicate it in the one case as in the other.'

Mr. Bright proceeded to argue that the representations as to the naval augmentations and coast fortifications in France were gross exaggerations ; but they acted upon the people, and if the people believed them, he charged this to the contemptible cowardice of the Cabinet Ministers of this country. He arraigned in severe terms the policy of the present Administration towards France, characterising it as grossly inconsistent, and in one particular insulting at once to the people of England and of France. The Emperor of the French had made efforts to meet the wishes of the English Government, and we should act as if we thought him sincere and amicable towards this country. But the speech of Lord Palmerston the other night in bringing forward this resolution was calculated to encourage the panic in England, and to create excitement and distrust in France.

Demanding to know when the limit of our enormous expenditure was to be reached, Mr. Bright continued : ‘How has this change come about ? It all came about since the year 1853, when the flood-gates of passion were opened ; and from that time to the present the Exchequer has been open, and every man, it appears, has been allowed to put his hand into it, and spend just as much money as he likes. Up to that time it was boasted that the reign of Queen Victoria was to be a reign of peace. We were told that

“ No war or battle’s sound  
Was heard the world around ;  
The idle spear and shield were high up hung.”

But since then the Court seems to have its chief occupation in connection with military affairs ;—reviews in Hyde Park, reviews at Aldershot, shooting matches on Wimbledon Common,—all these are occupations which for a long time have been foreign to the English Court, and for which I believe in my conscience there is not a particle of justification at the moment at which I am speaking. The people are stimulated to arm, the Cabinet is constantly devising new modes of expenditure, and all this appears to be based on the ignorance of the people, the clamours of the services, and the want of courage in the Cabinet to speak the real truth to the nation.’

Mr. Bright said that a great Minister of Queen Elizabeth once declared that England would never be undone except by a Parliament; and he feared that what was now occurring was tending to that which we understood by the undoing of a nation. The coming census of the United States was expected to show a population of 32,000,000 souls, or more than the next census of the United Kingdom would show; yet the expenses of the whole Government of the United States would not amount to more than £12,000,000 sterling. Now he asked whether it was possible that we could continue to raise from the people of this country £60,000,000 of taxes in excess of what an equal population was called to pay for its Government and its policy in the United States. Mr. Bright then closed with this stirring and vigorous peroration:—

‘France may be our enemy. I do not believe she is. There may be enemies abroad; but I can find nobody who can point them out. I can, however, point out an enemy at home, and that is this insane and wicked policy, which requires that you should abstract from the labour and the industry of the people of England this enormous, incredible, and ruinous sum from year to year. What is the result in every other country? If somebody had told the Minister of Louis XIV. that his extravagance would end in disaster to France, he would have answered them, as I shall be answered, “The country is rich enough,—the glory of France is worth more than your sordid considerations of pounds, shillings, and pence. France must keep a great position in Europe—there is no burden which France will not easily by its elasticity raise itself under and support.” But do we not know that in another generation his family became exiles; the aristocracy of his country was overthrown; another branch of his family has been exiled, and the kingdom which he did so much to ruin has been subjected to sixty years of anarchy and recurring revolution! This is the story history tells of other countries as well as of France; and if we pursue the same course, I fear the history which will be written in the future of our time will be exactly like that which has been written of France and of other countries. You will have an exiled royal family, you will have an overthrown aristocracy, and you will have a period of recurring revolution; and there is no path so straight, so downward, so slippery, so easily travelled to all these misfortunes, as the path which we are now following, year after year, adding to these enormous expenses, until the time will come when there will be some change throughout the country, when men will open their eyes, will ask who has deceived them, defrauded them, pillaged them. And then you will have to pay the penalty which all men in the upper classes of society in every country have had to pay when they have not maintained the rights of the great body of the people in this particular, and when they have not performed the duties which devolved upon them as the governing classes of the country. It is because I hate this policy—because I condemn this expenditure—because I see that it will lead to more expenditure, and

to the wider prevalence of this policy, that I oppose with all my heart the resolution of the noble lord ; and in doing that, I feel the strongest conviction in my conscience that I am doing my duty, not less to the people of whom I am one, than to the monarchy under which I live.'

The orator might as well have appealed to a wall of adamant. The House was panic-stricken, and the amendment was negatived by the large majority of 268 to 39. Another amendment moved by the hon. gentleman himself only obtained thirty-seven votes, and the original resolution was agreed to. A bill was subsequently brought in to give effect to the resolution, and the second reading was carried by 141 to 32. The measure afterwards passed through both Houses.

Mr. Bright took the opportunity during the session of 1860 of expressing his views on the question of English support of Turkey, in a debate which arose in connection with the disturbances in Syria. Massacres of Christians had taken place, and Turkey was apparently too weak to secure the safety of the Christian population. While admitting that no intervention within our memory could be so well excused as that undertaken by England in regard to affairs in Syria, Mr. Bright said he rose to protest against the policy of maintaining the integrity of the Turkish Empire, and of supporting the Sultan's Government. According to Lord John Russell's own statement, this Power was doomed to extinction, and no human aid could avert its decay. After re-establishing the power and dignity of the Porte, and securing the integrity of the Turkish Empire by a treaty of the various Powers of Europe, we found that country, seven years after the commencement of the Crimean war, in a worse condition of anarchy than it was before we meddled with it. There was much talk of improvement, but it was only to bolster up the stock markets. No improvement was made, and in Syria the authorities of the Sultan did not lift a hand to stay the shedding of the blood of our fellow-creatures, and, to some extent, our co-religionists. What was to be the end of it ?

After further dwelling upon the helplessness of Turkey, Mr. Bright said : 'The question of Constantinople, which is supposed to be the great political question, is surely not an insuperable

difficulty. It cannot be said that Heaven permitted a great city to grow up in a favoured spot to form continually a bone of contention between the nations of Europe, or that the statesmen who have settled so many questions cannot suggest what can be done with this. What I am myself most anxious for is that England should hold itself aloof from that policy—should, in point of fact, repudiate it altogether as a mistake, that the integrity of the Turkish Empire is to be maintained, and that, not this power, but the pretended power—the feebleness and the dignity of the Sultan—is to be supported; and that all this is to be done again at the expense of the taxes drawn from the English people, and of the blood of Englishmen squandered like water in the endeavour to do that which nature says is impossible, and that all experience tells us we must fail in if we ever attempt.'

Language almost precisely similar to this with regard to Turkey was used by many eminent English statesmen nearly twenty years later. Mr. Bright saw public opinion grow rapidly towards his own views, in fact, when the crisis arose which resulted in the Russo-Turkish war.

In the session of 1864 Mr. Bright spoke again on a question relating to foreign politics, when he chivalrously defended Mr. Stansfeld—member for Halifax, and a Junior Lord of the Admiralty in Lord Palmerston's Government—from the aspersions cast upon him. It appears that at the trial in Paris of Greco and others for conspiring to assassinate the Emperor of the French, it was stated by the Procureur-Imperial in his speech, that a paper had been found in the possession of one of the accused persons, directing him to write for money to Mr. Flowers, at 35 Thurloe Square, Brompton, 'where,' the Procureur added, 'a member of the English Parliament resided, who, in 1855, had been appointed banker to the Tibaldi conspirators.' The matter was first referred to by Mr. Cox, the member for Finsbury, when Mr. Stansfeld warmly repudiated the statement made by the Procureur-Imperial. He said it was quite true that he lived at the address indicated, but he knew nothing whatever of the prisoner Greco. He had permitted M. Mazzini, under the name of Mr. Flowers, to have letters addressed to him at

his house. He had been on intimate terms with M. Mazzini for the past eighteen years, and he was persuaded that no man had ever been more cruelly or wrongfully maligned than he was.

Mr. P. A. Taylor pointed out that it would have been absurd to expect that letters addressed to Mazzini in his own name would be delivered to him in London. Although Mr. Stansfeld, however, expressly affirmed that he had no knowledge of the nature of the correspondence which passed between Mazzini and his friends, Mr. Disraeli strongly attacked both the member for Halifax and the eminent Italian patriot.

On the 17th of March, when the House proposed to go into Committee of Supply, Sir Henry Stracey moved as an amendment, 'That the speech of the Procureur-Imperial on the trial of Greco, implicating a member of this House and of Her Majesty's Government in the plot for the assassination of our ally the Emperor of the French, deserves the serious consideration of this House.'

Mr. Stansfeld now repeated his denials, though he admitted having, in common with other English friends, allowed M. Mazzini to receive letters addressed to him at his house under the designation of M. Fiori, *Anglicé* Flowers. In the course of the debate which followed, Lord Palmerston said he regarded the explanation of Mr. Stansfeld as perfectly satisfactory.

Mr. Bright called upon the House, which had usually been fair in its judgments, not to discuss this matter in a spirit which was unfair and ungenerous to Mr. Stansfeld. He referred to members of the House who in the past had distinguished themselves as the friends of Polish, Hungarian, and Italian refugees; and if there was any man who would stand up and say he never felt a particle of sympathy for the refugees who had been driven to this country, he (Mr. Bright) said he despised him. M. Mazzini had a profound devotion to the principle of the unity and independence of Italy. He was a man of a powerful and fascinating character, and obtained over those with whom he associated a singular influence.

Mr. Bright then observed that Mr. Disraeli, in his early writings, had expressed opinions—it might be merely to excite a sensation

amongst his readers—very much like those attributed to M. Mazzini.

Mr. Disraeli hereupon sprang up and said, 'There is not the slightest foundation for that statement. I give it the most unequivocal contradiction.'\*

Resuming, Mr. Bright said, then doubtless those who quoted writings said to be the right hon. gentleman's were in error. He accepted Mr. Disraeli's statement freely, but he was not about to blame him. That kind of writing often came in youth from great enthusiasm and from an acquaintance with what at school they were taught to regard as the heroic deeds of ancient days. He (Mr. Bright) did not rise for the purpose of saying a single syllable in defence of Mazzini. His observations were intended to explain, and in some degree to justify, the friendship that had existed between him and other eminent foreigners and the member for Halifax. After all that had been said, however,—remembering the official position of the member for Halifax, and admitting all that had been urged against him,—he would ask hon. gentlemen opposite whether the course they were taking was one worthy of a great party. He did not differ from them in their disgust and horror at the attempt on the life of the Emperor of France; but if he were as

\* The opinions referred to by Mr. Bright were expressed in one of Lord Beaconsfield's early works, *The Revolutionary Epick*, in which occurred this passage:—

'Blest be the hand that dares to wave  
The regicidal steel that shall redeem  
A nation's sorrow with a tyrant's blood !'

In the edition of 1864, the author revised this passage so as to read as follows:—

'Dark Pharaoh's doom  
Shall cool your chariot wheels, and hallowed be  
The regicidal steel that shall redeem  
A nation's woe.'

Other revolutionary passages were also toned down in meaning. It was claimed on behalf of Lord Beaconsfield that he could not be held responsible for the opinions put into the mouth of his characters; but this only makes his radical alteration of the important passages in question the more inexplicable. The noble lord said that his alterations were purely literary ones, but a comparison of the respective texts of 1834 and 1864 will show that this was not the case, and that there was really some ground for Mr. Bright's reference to *The Revolutionary Epick*.

hungry as the hungriest person to place himself on the Treasury Bench, he would be ashamed to make his way to it over the character, the reputation, the happiness, and the future of the last-appointed and youngest member of the Government.

Sir H. Stracey's amendment was negatived by 171 to 161, but the subject was revived on the following evening by Lord Elcho; and as it appeared that a series of premeditated attacks was designed against the member for Halifax, in order to avoid embarrassing the Government, Mr. Stansfeld resigned his office. Lord Palmerston accepted the resignation, but not without considerable reluctance.

These various addresses by Mr. Bright on foreign questions demonstrate that while he was pre-eminently a statesman watchful and solicitous as regards purely British home interests, he had yet that breadth of view which truly grasps and assesses the important relations sustained by the British Empire towards continental nations.



## CHAPTER XVIII.

*THE PAPER DUTIES.—REFORM.—CHURCH RATES, ETC.*

Opposition to the Repeal of the Paper Duty.—The Bill rejected by the Lords.—A Constitutional Question.—Mr. Bright on the House of Lords.—Debate in the Commons on the question of Privilege.—Lengthy Speech by Mr. Bright.—Defence of Mr. Gladstone and his Policy.—The Government meet the Paper Duty difficulty.—Mr. Bright on Lord Palmerston.—Lord John Russell's Reform Bill of 1860.—Mr. Bright's examination of the Measure.—Meeting at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester.—Mr. Bright on Strikes.—Further Debate on the Reform Bill.—The measure is withdrawn.—Mr. Bright on the Session of 1860.—Addresses at Wakefield, Leeds, and Birmingham.—Parliamentary Debates on Church Rates.—Speeches by Mr. Bright.—Reasons for Abolition.—Ultimate Settlement of the Question.—The Session of 1861.—The Reform Question.—Mr. Gladstone's Budget.—The Paper Duty again.—Mr. Bright defends the Budget.—Protest against the Navy Estimates.



NE of the main features of Mr. Gladstone's important budget of 1860 was the proposition for the repeal of the paper duty. This proposal was strenuously resisted by the Conservatives, and it ultimately led to a conflict between the two Houses of the Legislature. On the second reading of the bill embodying the provision, Sir W. Miles moved an amendment that, as the repeal of the paper duty would necessitate the addition of a penny in the pound to the property and income tax, it was the opinion of the House that such repeal was, under such circumstances, at the present moment, inexpedient. A long debate ensued, in the course of which Mr. Milner Gibson, speaking against the amendment, showed the oppressive effects of the duty upon the cheap press, by eating up its profits; and he also referred to the influence which its impoverish-

ment must exert upon its quality. Regarded in this light, the paper duty was really a tax upon knowledge, while it operated as an obstacle to the reward and the enterprise of authors.

Mr. Gladstone defended his proposition, pointing out that the paper duty burdened the trade in all its branches, and its effect was to create a claim of monopolies, or a system of narrow and exclusive trading, between the making of paper and the selling of books. The amendment was negatived by 245 to 192. Another debate occurred on the third reading, on a hostile motion by Sir Stafford Northcote. The bill was carried, however, but only by a small majority, 219 members voting with Government, and 210 against.

When the bill came before the House of Lords, it was rejected by 193 to 104 votes. This rejection raised the important constitutional question as to the right of the House of Lords to reject a bill involving matters of taxation that had received the sanction of the House of Commons. Lord Palmerston, who was by no means so earnest on this question as Mr. Gladstone, moved for a Committee, on the 25th of May, which should institute an inquiry into the precedents on the subject. An amendment was moved by Mr. Duncombe, to the effect that Parliament ought not to adjourn beyond November next, so that another opportunity might be afforded to the House of Lords of accepting the bill.

In the course of the discussion, Mr. Bright said he regretted to find that some members on the opposite side of the House were disposed to treat this question with levity. If he were a member of the party opposite, he thought he should view the question as one of great gravity. He agreed with Mr. Duncombe that there was a growing feeling in the popular mind on this subject; and, from the tone of the press throughout the country, he believed that in the course of a few days there would be a wide and almost universal discontent in reference to the course which the House of Lords had taken. He had felt a great interest in the repeal of the paper duty; but that question fell into utter insignificance in comparison with the greater question which had been raised between the two Houses of Parliament. He considered that the noble lord (Palmerston) had not done himself justice, and that he had not done justice to Parlia-

ment and the country in not adopting a more decided course. The course which the noble lord had proposed was perilous to the House, and might prove fatal to the Administration of which he was the chief. He agreed with the amendment, which affirmed that time and reconsideration would probably act as mediators between the two Houses of Parliament.

The Committee—upon which Mr. Bright consented to serve—was ultimately nominated, but Mr. Gladstone was understood to be in favour of a bolder course than that which the Premier recommended.

The conduct of the Lords created great dissatisfaction in the country, and Mr. Bright severely commented upon it at a great meeting held at Manchester. He remarked that there was no dissolution for the House of Lords. 'If a peer dies, there is no measurable instant of time between the death of him who dies to-day and him who votes to-morrow. The spirit does not pass from the body into space with greater rapidity, or with a more unseen motion, than passes the legislative power from the dead peer to the living one. The only things that do not die are the prejudices, the alarms, the self-interests, the determination to combine for the interest of their body, which necessarily, in all countries and in all ages, have acted upon irresponsible powers, like that which our House of Lords is now assuming to become. Our taxes are drawn from the capital of the country, from the skill of its population, from the toil of all those who work, as no other people in the world perhaps do work; and I say that we shall have reason for ever to be ashamed of ourselves, that our children will have to be ashamed that they come from us, if we do not now resist every attempt to take from the House of Commons that which the constitution has given to them, and which we find to be essential to our security and our freedom—namely, the absolute, the irreversible, and uncontrolled management of the taxation and finances of this great kingdom.'

When the subject again came before the House of Commons on the 1st of June, upon a question by Lord Fermoy, Mr. Bright spoke strongly as to the attitude which the House of Commons ought to assume in resisting any infringement of its privileges and its rights.

'I do not think that we could commit a greater treason,' he said, 'to every branch of the Legislature—to the Crown, to the Commons, and to the House of Lords itself, than to permit a matter of this kind to be passed over as if it were of no importance, and I think the posterity of the existing generation of Englishmen would have reason to look back—with contempt I will say—upon the Parliament of 1860, if it did not thoroughly sift this question to the bottom, and act in accordance with the principles of the Constitution in the defence of those rights and liberties, if we find that they have been in any degree assailed.'

The usages of the Commons had certainly been infringed by the Upper House; and after the Committee had made their report, Lord Palmerston gave notice of three resolutions to be moved by him. On the 5th of July he brought forward the first of these resolutions as follows: 'That the right of granting aids and supplies to the Crown is in the Commons alone, as an essential part of their constitution; and the limitation of all such grants, as to the matter, manner, measure, and time, is only in them.' His lordship, while observing that the constitutional question involved was a very important one, advised the House to be satisfied with a declaration of their constitutional privileges.

In the debate which followed many important speeches were made. Mr. Gladstone, who reproached the Opposition with being silent partisans of a gigantic innovation, gave his assent to the resolutions because they contained a mild and temperate but a firm declaration of the rights of the House of Commons. As Mr. Collier had shown, after an examination of the pretended precedents, there was not a rag or shred of authority for the claim put forth by the House of Lords. Mr. Disraeli gave his cordial assent to the resolution, which, in his opinion expressed a temperate and wise course on the part of the House. Lord John Russell condemned the act of the House of Lords as rash and unjustifiable, while Mr. Horsman claimed that they had checked the House of Commons in a headlong, precipitate, and mad career.

Mr. Bright followed Mr. Horsman with a very animated and effective speech. He began by expressing his surprise that Mr.

Horsman had not concluded his speech by an amendment that would reverse the resolution. He (Mr. Bright) was not satisfied with the course which the House was invited to take. He would not attack the resolutions, nor would he defend them. They were not worthy of the occasion, and bore marks of having been written by more than one hand. It could not be denied that the Lords, if they had not violated the privileges of the Commons, had broken the usage of Parliament. The appointment of the Committee, and the very resolution before the House, condemned, by implication, what the Lords had done; but the course proposed by the Committee would denote in aftertimes a melancholy decline of spirit in the House of Commons. The Lords, to whom the theories of Mr. Horsman had always been palatable, had made repeated efforts to exercise the power of amending money bills which had been defeated by the Commons. Mr. Bright then adduced the precedents on this question, from the year 1407 onwards, and he showed that the resolutions of the House in 1678 and 1691 asserted the absolute control of the Commons over all aids and supplies granted to the Crown, and this right was reasserted in subsequent years. A stream of resolutions and declarations confirmed and consecrated the principle existing for five hundred years, and which he had thought every one admitted,—the fundamental and unchangeable principle of the English Constitution, that taxation and representation were inseparable in this kingdom.

The speaker then went on to apply the resolutions and declarations to the use of the paper duty, which from the time of Queen Anne had crippled a very important industry. It had done very successfully what Queen Anne's Ministers wanted; it had threatened, and, to a large extent, it had strangled the press of the country. As to the question whether sugar should be relieved to the extent of a million, tea of a million, or paper of a million, he came to the conclusion that the abolition of the paper duty was not only a relief to that amount in money, but it was a relief to a great industry, and to several other industries whose prosperity must depend on an abundant and cheap supply of paper. He spoke with some knowledge of the subject, and he had not the least doubt that the abolition

of the paper duty was a positive relief to the whole people of the country equal to double the relief which would have been afforded by a reduction equal in amount to the duty on the articles of tea and sugar.

Mr. Bright then proceeded to show why the House of Commons was the best judge in the country of what was necessary for the trade, and also what was required by the financial condition of the country :—

‘First of all, there are among us a good many sagacious men of all sorts. There are, as I know, some very sagacious landowners ; we found it very hard to beat them, even when they had a very bad case. We have a very sagacious gentleman down here who spoke to-night, and who, whatever be the question which comes before us, always finds some very fitting object for his merciless and unscrupulous vituperation. We know, many of us intimately, all the details connected with these questions ; in fact, I suppose there is not a trade in this country of any importance or note that cannot find its representatives in this House. For many years past we have had the absolute control of questions of finance, and I undertake to declare, notwithstanding what the right hon. gentleman has stated, that there is not a representative body in the world which during the last twenty years has done more in the way of financial and fiscal reforms with greater advantage to the people. And yet, at the end of that period, when the triumphs of this House are to be found not in granite and bronze monuments, but in the added comforts of the population, and in the increased and undoubted loyalty of the people, you are now, forsooth, asked by the right hon. gentleman to abdicate your functions, and to invite 400 gentlemen, who are not traders, who have never been financiers, who do not possess means in any degree equalling your own of understanding the question—you are to ask them to join your councils, and not only to advise, but to check, and even to control.’

They were now asked, continued Mr. Bright, in terms not ambiguous, to overthrow the fabric which had grown up in the country, and which had existed without damage for at least five hundred years. The House of Lords had not behaved with fair honour towards the House of Commons in this matter ; for every man of them who knew anything about what he was voting for knew that the House of Commons repealed the paper excise, not merely because it wished to remit a million of taxes, but because it thought that to strangle a great industry was an injurious mode of raising revenue, and therefore it transferred that amount of taxation from the paper excise to the income tax. Moreover, it was an unfair proceeding to refuse to allow the paper duty to be repealed

while they retained the additional income tax, which was substituted for it. The Lords had trampled on the confidence and taken advantage of the faith of the House of Commons. As to their having rejected the Paper Duty Abolition Bill by a large majority, a peer had confessed to him that it would certainly have passed if it had come before those only who regularly attended the sittings of the House. 'About two hundred members, who hardly ever come there, were let loose for the occasion.'

Mr. Bright urged that the Lords had thrown out this bill by a large majority, thinking that by so doing they were making a violent attack on the Ministry, and especially on the Chancellor of the Exchequer. It would have been consonant with the dignity of the House of Commons to have passed another bill to repeal the paper duty, thus giving the Lords an opportunity of reconsidering their position. If this course had been taken, without passion and without collision, the difficulty would have been got over. With regard to this paper duty, 'repeal was consistent with the policy of the Whigs before Sir Robert Peel came into power, with the policy of Sir Robert Peel's Government, of Lord Derby's Government, of Lord John Russell's Government, of Lord Aberdeen's Government, of Lord Palmerston's Government, of Lord Derby's last Government, and of the existing Government. The policy of the repeal of the paper duty is the recognised policy of this House, and it is the admitted interest of this country. Then, why, unless it be for a party triumph, unless it be to attack a particular Minister, why is this question of £700,000 this year, and less than double that sum in future years, raised to an importance which does not belong to it? and why, for the sake of a party triumph, are the great interests connected with it to be damaged and tortured, as they now are, by the action of one House of Parliament?'

The speaker then paid a high tribute to Mr. Gladstone, who was especially attacked through the policy on the repeal of the paper duty, affirming that in 1853 his financial measures were the chief strength of the Government of Lord Aberdeen, and that the power and authority which Lord Palmerston's Administration had acquired during the present session had been gained mainly as the

consequence of his beneficent propositions. His budget had been received with universal approbation. Having replied to Mr. Horsman's deprecatory and inaccurate remarks upon the French Treaty, Mr. Bright referred to the great increase in our commerce, adding, 'When you now attack, through the Chancellor of the Exchequer, principles the adoption of which has wrought this great good, you are not, in my opinion, pursuing a course which will enhance your reputation with the country which you profess to represent. There is not, I contend, a man who labours and sweats for his daily bread, there is not a woman living in a cottage who strives to make her humble home happy and comfortable for her husband and her children, to whom the words of the Chancellor of the Exchequer have not brought hope, and to whom his measures, which have been defended with an eloquence few can equal, and with a logic none can contest, have not administered consolation. I appeal to the past and present condition of the country, and I ask you, solemnly, to oppose no obstacle to the realisation of those great and good principles of legislation.'

Mr. Bright complained that Lord Palmerston had not shown more courage in this matter, and thus concluded :—

'I fear this session may as a consequence become memorable as that in which, for the first time, the Commons of England have surrendered a right which for five hundred years they had maintained unimpaired. I, at least, and those who act with me, will be clear from any participation in this; we shall be free from the shame which must indelibly attach to the chief actors in these proceedings. I protested against the order of reference which the noble lord proposed, though I sat and laboured on the Committee with earnest fidelity on behalf of the House of Commons. I have felt it an honour to sit in this House up to this time, and I hope that hereafter the character of this House will not be impaired by the course which is about to be taken. I have endeavoured to show to my countrymen what I consider to be almost the treason which is about to be committed against them. I have refused to dishonour the memory of such members as Coke and Selden, and Glanville and Pym; and if defeated in this struggle, I shall have this consolation, that I have done all I can to maintain the honour of this House, and that I have not sacrificed the interests, which my constituents committed to my care.'

The whole of Lord Palmerston's resolutions were agreed to without a division, but the question was not allowed to remain in this stage. Lord Fermoy subsequently moved a resolution pro-



testing against the encroachments of the Lords, but it was rejected by 177 to 138. As the Excise duty on paper was thus continued, in consequence of the action of the Upper House, Mr. Gladstone met the difficulty by proposing an adjustment of the Customs duty on paper with reference to the French Treaty. The paper manufacturers exerted their utmost influence to defeat the measure, alleging special circumstances which exempted their case from the rule of Free Trade. The Conservatives warmly espoused the cause of the paper-makers, but Mr. Gladstone delivered a powerful and conclusive speech in favour of his new measure. Mr. Puller moved an amendment, and was supported by the Conservative leaders, but the propositions of the Government were eventually adopted by 266 votes to 233.

The constitutional question was again adverted to by Mr. Bright on the 10th of August. After sketching the bolder policy which Lord Palmerston ought to have adopted on this question—and which he would have adopted if he had had the spirit of a Chatham or a Canning—he said, ‘ There is such a thing as treason. It is a crime which is probably known to the law of every country. We have it in our law. It is committed generally against a monarchy or against a state. It may have in it much that is evil, and it may have in it much that is good. Treason of that kind is a crime which may load a man with shame for ever, or it may cover him with lasting renown. But there is another kind of treason, which is treason against a people, which may be committed by a Minister of the Crown, by an assenting Cabinet, and by a compliant Legislative body ; but that is a treason which is all evil, which has no good whatever in it ; it covers no man or body of men with renown ; but it covers them with contempt and infamy, decreed I believe by the just judgment of posterity. I hope and pray that when the impartial pen of history in aftertimes shall tell the story of our doings in this session of the British Parliament, it may not have to say that the Prime Minister and his colleagues, and the House of Commons supporting them, let down the power of the House of Commons, and sacrificed and betrayed—as I fear we are in danger of sacrificing and betraying—those most solemn and important rights which we

are bound to maintain, I undertake to say, by sanctions and engagements stronger than any which oaths can give.'

Lord Fermoy, who had announced his intention of moving a resolution with regard to the conduct of the House of Lords, now said he had no alternative but to abandon the question during the present session; and this important matter dropped. The general feeling of the country, however, was with those who protested against the unconstitutional action of the House of Lords.

We now pass on to another important question. The Liberal Government pledged themselves to bring in a Reform Bill during the session of 1860, and on the 1st of March the scheme was introduced by that veteran reformer Lord John Russell. It was proposed to reduce the borough franchise to £6, a step which would have had the effect of increasing the number of voters from 440,000 to 634,000. Twenty-five seats were to be taken from small places returning two members, and divided among new constituencies. Leave was given to bring in the bill, and Mr. Cardwell, Secretary for Ireland, also obtained leave to bring in a bill for that country which reduced the qualification for voting for counties from £12 (required by the Act of 1850) to £10, and substituted a borough franchise of £6 for £8. The Lord Advocate further introduced a measure for Scotland, providing a £10 occupation franchise for counties, and a borough franchise of £6. The property qualification for counties to be reduced from £10 to £5.

The House generally exhibited little enthusiasm over these measures, but in the debate on the second reading, on the 19th of March, Mr. Bright delivered a vigorous speech. He said that in one respect he was in the same condition as Mr. Disraeli; he did not desire to reject this bill on the second reading, and he should not endeavour to persuade the House that it was a dangerous and fatal measure; on the contrary, though anxious for a good measure of Parliamentary Reform, he was ready to make due allowance for the difficulty of dealing with this question. It was evident that the bill met with two kinds of objectors—one who thought it went too far, another who wished it to go further. He did not oppose or advocate it upon either ground. He regarded the measure as the

fulfilment of a pledge given by the Government. As to the redistribution of seats, he had thought it would be better that the reform should be by steps, and this was a bill for reducing the franchise in counties and boroughs ; it did not settle the question of disfranchisement, or the transfer of seats ; it rather unsettled it. If it passed, it would not add more than 160,000 to the borough constituency. And how many of these would be working men ? Not more than 100,000 ; how, then, could it be said that they would swamp the other classes ? The objection that the measure did not go far enough, was more difficult to answer, and was a rational objection. He thought this parsimony on the part of the House was a mistake ; that the character of the lower classes would justify a more liberal view of the matter. But if 300,000 or 400,000 were admitted to the franchise, he could not refuse the measure, because, in his opinion, those numbers ought to be doubled.

Mr. Bright said he considered the bill failed in certain points. He objected to the ratepaying and other clauses of the bill. As to the ballot, that question would be brought under consideration on a future occasion, and he was convinced that, under this bill, there would be a still greater necessity for that measure. He pointed out that circumstances in 1860 were very different from those under which the bill of 1832 was passed. ‘ There is no howling wind, no imminent convulsion ; but there is the steady, the ever-growing, the irresistible tide of public opinion ; there is the consciousness among millions of your countrymen that Parliament does not adequately represent them, and is not just to them ; and silently, but surely and inevitably, this opinion is marching on to its triumph. The very footprints in which these gentlemen on the Treasury Bench trod not long ago, are now swept away, and the point which you occupied not long since on this question is submerged and gone. I ask you not to resist this growing and gathering opinion. By a concession even so small as that which it is the object of this bill to make, you will show that you have a generous confidence in your countrymen—you will show that you believe in the constitution of your country, that it really means a representation of the people ; and you will show further, what I hope you will prove by your votes

on this bill, that you are willing the institutions you boast of so much, and pretend to love so much, shall repose upon the goodwill, the intelligence, and the virtue of your countrymen.'

After a debate extending over many evenings, the bill was read a second time without a division. On the 12th of April, Mr. Bright spoke on the question of Reform at a great meeting in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, when seven thousand persons were present. In the course of this speech, he defended the right of working men to engage in strikes when the condition of trade made such a step necessary. In nine cases out of ten, perhaps in ninety-nine out of a hundred, a strike would be better avoided; but the strike was a reserve power. He continued:—

'But if these strikes are sometimes—it may be often, it may be mostly—bad, and that, I think all classes of persons would agree to, still the House of Commons and Mr. Whiteside and his friends are not the parties to upbraid the working men with what they do upon this matter. The House of Commons itself was a great trades union from 1815 to 1846. (Cheers.) You know that the Shibboleth of country members was wheat at so much, barley at so much, oats at so much; and one of them, wishing to be minute in the profession of his faith—the member for the North Riding of Yorkshire—was for establishing a proportionate price for new milk cheese. (Laughter.) Now, we combined against this system. We "struck." (Loud applause.) Why, nature itself, constant and beneficent as she always is, "struck" against this inhuman system. The very harvest rotted in your fields. As in the old time the bondsmen of Egypt were liberated by means of the plagues of Egypt, so famine and fever, and an exodus greater than that which Moses led, was necessary, and came and succeeded in striking off the manacles from the industry of the people of this kingdom.'

Ministers had appointed the 4th of June for going into Committee on the Reform Bill, but when that date arrived there was little chance, considering the position of affairs, that the bill could be got through both Houses in time to become law. During the debate which now arose, however, Mr. Bright made another urgent appeal to the House to pass the bill, and so settle this important question. There could be little difference of opinion, he said, as to the object of the discussion. The real question was, not whether the House would wait until the census had been taken—as Sir J. Fergusson's motion asked them to do—or until the Irish and Scotch bills could be discussed, but whether they were willing during the

present session to pass any measure of Reform. He did not believe that the views of the leader of the Opposition differed materially from those of Her Majesty's Government on this question, though he had been unable to persuade his followers to pursue a course which he was prepared to take himself. The subject of Parliamentary Reform had been recommended from the Throne, and votes had been given in that House in favour of Reform; yet the other side still resisted even so moderate a measure as this, which proposed to open the door to 300,000 or 350,000 in the United Kingdom, or one in twenty of the men now excluded; and no one could say that this concession would be perilous to the constitution.

Mr. Bright observed, however, that it had been frequently asserted during the discussion that the admission of this number would give up the representation of the country and the power of Parliament to a class altogether unworthy of the trust—an assertion which, having had ample means of knowing the wishes, opinions, and character of the working classes, he strenuously denied, and could disprove by evidence. He had made a series of calculations, from which he estimated that the annual income of the working classes derived from wages was £312,000,000, and the aggregate income of all the other classes was only one million sterling more than this amount; but the former had not a single member to represent them in that House, nor a voice in the choice of a member to speak their opinions as to the amount of the taxation, or the mode in which it was laid on the shoulders of the people. With regard to this bill, his opinion was that, though he should have wished it to go further, if the franchise were brought down to £6, it would fix the point just where a man might hope by frugality and industry to bring himself within the line, and therefore would be of the greatest benefit to the working classes. As to the redistribution of seats, the present measure only touched the fringe of the question. He implored the House, with all the power and earnestness which it was possible for him to infuse into words, to pass the bill, and treat their countrymen with generosity and justice.

On the division, Ministers had a majority of 21, but as it was practically hopeless to attempt to get through with the bill, on the

11th of June Lord John Russell announced its withdrawal. Mr. Bright said that although he could not blame the noble lord for the course he had taken, he lamented to find his own hopes blighted. But it would be unjust to attack the Government for difficulties for which they were not entirely responsible. The session, however, had not been wholly without results: the reform of the Tariff was of itself a measure of great importance, so was the Commercial Treaty, and nothing could exceed the good faith and honour of the French Government in their endeavours to carry out the provisions of the treaty. He had authority for saying that, as the Convention was now proceeding, the results of the treaty would be such as to exceed the sanguine anticipations of its friends. With regard to the Reform Bill, it was a very moderate and a very reasonable one, and the opposition to it had been emboldened by members on the Liberal side of the House, who wanted a pure Whig Government, which would never be seen again—which, in fact, was just as much extinct as the dodo. But he preferred that the Government should withdraw their bill rather than that it should be mangled in committee, and a £6 franchise altered to one of £8, which would be most pernicious. He hoped that the House, if it would not have a Reform Bill for itself, would not allow its rights to be impaired by letting in the pretensions of the Peers. If in addition to Mr. Gladstone's commercial measures there had been an extension of the suffrage, he thought it would have been said in aftertimes that there had been no session of the Parliament of England comparable to that of 1860 for the good it had given the people, and for the binding effect which its legislation had had between the great body of the people and the three estates of the realm.

The bill was withdrawn, and the question of Reform was postponed to another and more convenient period, as it had been postponed before.

Towards the close of 1860, Mr. Bright on several occasions directly addressed the working classes. Speaking at the annual meeting of the Wakefield Mechanics' Institute, on the 20th November, he said that there was nothing so entirely neglected in the education of the working classes as the consideration of the

principle upon which the permanent prosperity and peace of nations or of commonwealths were based. They were infinitely more important than the ephemeral struggles and triumphs which attended, the ambition of a statesman. The science of political economy was of immense importance. If through bad principles of legislation, if through error of government, public resources were wasted, if a vast quantity of our industry were misdirected, if such great blunders were made, we might have rich men and rich families, but we might rely upon it the multitude would still be poor, and the little comforts they had would still be precarious. By governing more wisely, we might give greater glory to the country, dispense greater happiness amongst the families of which it was composed, and do that which was not a little thing—they might do something to 'justify the ways of God to man.'

Early in December Mr. Bright attended the inauguration of the Leeds Working Men's Parliamentary Association, and paid a high tribute to the working classes. He said he had asked himself, 'Why this dread of the people? I have lived amongst them all my life—I never had any distrust of them, I never expected perfection in them any more than I found it elsewhere or conceived it to exist in myself, but I say that for those qualities that go to make a people, that are requisite to fulfil the duties of citizenship, the working classes of this country need not bow the head before the highest in the land.' With regard to the question of Parliamentary Reform, he said, Reform might be delayed, but it could not be withheld. It was because he dreaded disorder, because he knew that resistance to just demands was the fertile parent of confusion in every state, because he wished England to be great, and glorious, and free, and moral, that he urged the working classes, the unenfranchised millions, to insist upon their just rights; and it was for those causes that he counselled the ruling classes to grant those rights, although it might be that his counsel would be in vain.

The Town Hall, Birmingham, was crowded on the 29th of January 1861, with constituents of Mr. Bright anxious to hear his address on that occasion. He spoke at length upon the questions of taxation and expenditure, remarking that he had never heard the

feeblest protest raised in the House of Lords against the extravagance of the Government. It was worth their while to know that, with very few exceptions, the members of the present peerage owed their peerages to creations within the last hundred years. The origin of them came from the rotten borough system : any man who could get four, five, or six seats in the House of Commons at his command to serve the Government of his day, could by ways known to such a gentleman procure for himself, in all probability, the dignity of a peerage. They might single out a few families who had come down from remote times, the majority of whom had generally shown themselves considerate and just to the people of the country ; but the modern peerage was bred in the slime and corruption of the rotten borough system, and they need not look to a House so constituted for any great anxiety to save the pockets of the nation. Mr. Bright referred to the good feeling which subsisted amongst the working classes notwithstanding their trials, and the taxation under which they laboured, and claimed for himself and his friends to be the true Conservatives in the country. England's past policy had loaded us with debt. It had desolated millions of houses, and added immeasurably to the chaos and infinitely to the sufferings of Europe. He would reverse this policy. He would practise a religious abstention from all the tumults and quarrels which might arise upon the Continent of Europe. As for the people, they were entitled to share in the bounty of Heaven so freely bestowed. 'As you have revolutionised your commercial legislation, revolutionise also your foreign policy, and bring it to the standard of common sense and common morality. Permit the people, for whom my very heart bleeds when I see the sufferings which so many of them endure—permit them to enjoy that which they created. The Crown will gain fresh lustre ; institutions that are good will be more stable ; and this nation, to its humblest homestead, will be ever the more contented and the more happy.'

In three successive sessions, Mr. Bright addressed the House of Commons on the subject of Church-rates. The first occasion was on the 27th of April 1860, in the debate on the third reading of Sir John Trelawny's Church Rates Abolition Bill. The measure had



been strongly opposed on its second reading, and also in committee, and on the order of the day for the third reading Mr. Whiteside moved its rejection. It was understood that a determined effort would be made to throw out the bill.

Only three important speeches were made, namely, those by Mr. Whiteside, Mr. Disraeli, and Mr. Bright, the first and second of whom strongly opposed the measure. Mr. Bright began by expressing his indebtedness to Mr. Whiteside for having, by his physical-force oratory, infused some new life into this question; but he had not done much to satisfy that great portion of the people who objected to Church-rates, and thought that they ought not to be permanently maintained. Mr. Whiteside had attached extraordinary importance to the opinions of the Wesleyan body on this question, but the large majority of Wesleyans united with the great body of other Dissenters in opposition to Church-rates. A total of more than eight hundred petitions had been presented from the Wesleyans in favour of this bill. Moreover, no inconsiderable number of regular attendants upon the Church of England joined the Dissenters in opposition to Church-rates.

Mr. Bright detailed what had taken place in the town of Rochdale on this question. Contests had been carried on in past years with a vigour and a determination, and, if they liked it, an animosity which had not been surpassed in any other part of the kingdom. But the result of the struggle was that the Church-rate was for ever entirely abolished in that parish, and for many years now the parish had been a model of tranquillity upon this question. 'It would not be enough that it should be a model of tranquillity if the result had followed which the learned gentleman foretold in such dolorous language, that religion would be uncared for, and that the Gospel would no longer be preached to the poor; but I will undertake to say that since that contest the venerable old parish church has had laid out upon it, in repairing and beautifying it, from money subscribed not altogether, but mainly, by churchmen, ten times—ay, twenty—times as much as was ever expended upon it during a far longer period of years in which Church-rates were levied.'

Touching upon another important point, Mr. Bright said he

wished Mr. Whiteside had told them why, year by year, there had been a growing power in that House in opposition to Church-rates, and why there was a secession from their advocates throughout the country. There were only two courses with reference to this most mischievous impost—either to leave the law exactly as it was, with all its irritating incidents, or to adopt this bill. Then came this remarkably effective passage in the orator's speech :—

'I often have occasion in this House to give hope to hon. gentlemen opposite. They are probably the most despairing political party that any country ever had within its borders. They despair of almost everything. They despaired of agriculture. Agriculture triumphed. They despair of their Church, yet whenever that Church has been left to its own resources and to the zeal of its members its triumph has been manifest to the country and to the world. Are you made of different material from the five millions of people who go to the Dissenting chapels of England and Wales? You have your churches—I speak of the old ones, not of those recently erected by means of voluntary contributions,—you have your churches, which you call national, and you have them for nothing. You have your ministers paid out of property anciently bequeathed or entrusted to the State for their use. In that respect you stand in a far better position for undertaking what, if Church-rates are abolished, you must undertake, than do the great body of your Dissenting brethren. Have you less zeal, have you less liberality, than they have? Do not you continually boast in this House that you are the owners of the great bulk of the landed property of the country? Are you not the depositaries of political power, and do you not tell us that when a Dissenter becomes rich he always walks away from the chapel into your church? If this be so, am I appealing in vain to you, or reasoning in vain with you, when I try to encourage you to believe that if there were no Church-rates the members of your church and your congregations would be greatly improved, and that, as has taken place in the parish in which I live, your churches would be better supported by your own voluntary and liberal contributions than they can ever be by the penny per pound issuing from the pockets of men who do not attend your church, and who are rendered ten times more hostile to it by the very effort to make them contribute to its support.'

Mr. Bright went on to express his belief that Church-rates must before long be abolished. He also referred to the voluntary exertions of the Dissenters, and asked, 'Throughout England and Wales what would be the condition of your population, your religious establishments, your education, if it were not for the liberality of those sects of whom the right hon. and learned gentleman thinks fit to speak in disparaging terms?' He did not disguise from the House that he agreed with the views of Mr. Miall and the Libera-

tion Society as to the disestablishment of the Church; but he believed, with them, that after that had taken place the Church would be as great, as powerful, and as respected as it ever was at any period of its history. Mr. Bright then reminded the House that in Ireland the vestry-cess, the Church-rate of that country, had been abolished,—and what had been the effect upon the Protestant Church of Ireland? In all human probability that Church would have been absolutely uprooted but for the large measures of reform applied to it; and the Church of England without Church-rates would be as great and as useful as now. Examples in Wales and in Scotland showed the impulse that might be given to voluntary efforts. Property in Scotland had not gone with the Free Church; yet what a vast result had been produced by religious zeal, fervour, and munificence!

The hon. member said he should slander the Church of England if he were to pretend that it would not be as liberal as any other religious body, while its congregations would be as united as those of Dissenters, and its action would be greatly strengthened. Mr. Bright thus closed his telling speech:—

‘This question has now come to a crisis; and I ask the House to consider whether it would not be to the advantage of the Church, of morality, religion, and the public peace, that it should now be set at rest once and for ever. The right hon. and learned gentleman—it is one of the faults of a high classical education—following the example of the right hon. gentleman who delighted us all with a brilliant but most illogical speech last night, affrighted us with an account of what took place under the democracies of Greece, and asks us to follow the example of those who were believers in the paganism of ancient Rome. He says, Did not the Roman emperors, consuls, and people go in procession after the vile gods and goddesses which they worshipped? It is true they did, and I hope the right hon. and learned gentleman regrets by this time that he asked us to follow an example of that kind. Rome has perished, and the religion which it professed has perished with it. The Christian religion is wholly different, and if there be one thing written more legibly than another in every page of that Book on which you profess that your Church is founded, it is that men should be just one to another, kind and brotherly one to another, and should not ask of each other to do that which they are not willing themselves to do. I say that this law of Church-rates is a law which violates, and violates most obviously and outrageously, every law of justice and of mercy which is written in that Book, and it is because I believe it does so that I am certain that it never can be of advantage to your Church, if your Church be a true Church; and, believing that, and feeling how much the interests and sympathies and wishes of millions of

our countrymen are in favour of the abolition of this impost, I ask you to do what I am now ready to do—to give a cordial support to the third reading of this bill of my hon. friend.'

The third reading of the bill was carried by 235 votes to 226, and the measure passed. When it went up to the House of Lords, however, it was rejected by a majority of 97.

The subject of Church-rates being still left an open question, much controversy ensued in the country, and in the following session of 1861 the friends of abolition again endeavoured to procure a satisfactory settlement of the matter. Sir John Trelawny re-introduced his bill, and on the motion for the second reading a long discussion took place. Sir W. Heathcote moved the rejection of the bill; but Mr. Gladstone, while unable to support the measure for abolition, admitted that on both sides there was a growing persuasion that it would be for the credit of the Legislature that this question should be settled. He suggested that the Legislature should begin by converting the power of the majority of the parish into a right, firmly maintaining the right of the parish to tax itself, giving to those parishes where the ancient Church-rate had lapsed the power of raising a voluntary rate.

Mr. Bright again spoke at length on behalf of the bill. He observed that as Mr. Gladstone proposed virtually to abolish Church-rates, he ought to begin by voting for the bill. He denied that the evils which Mr. Gladstone supposed likely to happen, if this bill passed, would happen; but if so, what a deadness would it argue in the population towards the Established Church? He appealed to hon. gentlemen opposite on the question of the amount involved in these rates. He believed that £250,000 was the whole matter, and of that it might be fairly assumed £100,000 probably—though he would take any figure they liked—was paid by those whom they were now prepared to exempt. Therefore the whole question probably for the great Church of England was only this—a matter of £150,000 a year. What did the Dissenters object to? asked Mr. Bright. They felt that this was a struggle for supremacy, a supremacy asserted on the part of a great establishment which was as much political as religious. The hon. member then proceeded to

denounce the practice of the sale of livings in the Church, quoting examples of this practice—examples which he acknowledged would be very amusing if they were not very shocking; and he asked whether such things could be pointed out in the Nonconformist churches of England and Wales.

Coming next to the great differences of opinion existing in the Church of England, Mr. Bright glanced in particular at the recently published *Essays and Reviews*, and affirmed that for a variety of reasons the Dissenters were indisposed to acknowledge the Church of England to be supreme over them. That Church was a divided Church, and he asked whether it was worth while to take the proposition of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, or any other proposition based upon ignorance of the state of feeling among the Nonconformist population of England. Having shown what the Dissenters had accomplished by voluntary effort, Mr. Bright said, 'You must not misunderstand the character of the Nonconformists. They come down from the Puritans of an earlier period, who, I believe, have gained for England all that there is of freedom in the English constitution. That is the opinion of Hume, the historian, and I think it must be the opinion of every one who carefully reads history. The lamp which these Puritans first lit has been kept burning by the Nonconformists of a later day. Those Puritans took their rise from the hour when the religious organisation of England was first dissevered from the Church of Rome. The principles they held have never died out, but have continually spread, and have found greater and greater acceptance with all classes of the people. I assure the House in all sincerity—and I believe in my conscience that I only speak the literal truth—that any attempt to settle this question by leaving any shred of Church-rate unrepealed will be a failure, and that the Nonconformists themselves will never abandon this question until a complete victory is won.'

Mr. Disraeli opposed the Bill, but Lord John Russell declared that the sooner Church-rates were abolished the better would it be for the Church, and the stronger would be its foundations. The amendment was negatived by 281 to 266, and the bill was read a second time.

But another great struggle took place on the third reading. Mr. Cross, Mr. Newdegate, and others supported substitutionary plans instead of this bill for simple abolition; but Mr. Bright said, all the plans which had been proposed did not hit the grievance. The object was to get rid of every shred of what the Dissenters regarded as the supremacy of the Church of England in relation to this particular question; to place the Church and other sects in that respect upon an equality. The resistance to Church-rates was not grounded upon the amount; there must be something deeper in the matter than money. He was going, he said, to vote for the third reading of the bill, but he was ready to assent to a compromise by which the compulsory power of levying the rate should be withdrawn, and the term of total abolition delayed.

When the division was taken, it was found that the numbers were exactly even—274 for the bill, and 274 against. Under these singular circumstances, the Speaker was called upon to give a casting vote—a right very rarely exercised in our Parliamentary history. He said that as far as he could collect the opinion of the House from the course of the debate, it was in favour of some settlement of the question different from that contained in the present bill; consequently he must give his vote against it, not being willing to take upon himself the responsibility of the proposed change. The measure was therefore lost—a result hailed with frantic cheers by the Opposition.

The question was yet again raised in the session of 1862, when Sir J. Trelawny re-introduced his measure for abolition. In the debate on the second reading on the 14th of May, Mr. Sotherton Estcourt, abandoning a plan he had formerly proposed, moved a resolution to the effect that it was unjust to abolish Church-rates until some substitute for them had been provided. Mr. Bright sarcastically observed that Mr. Estcourt, having repudiated and rejected every scheme, including his own, did not give the House good and encouraging advice in asking it to agree to his resolution. He had argued that it was founded upon a constitutional principle; but things had totally changed in the last seven or eight hundred years, and these rates were now incompatible with the rights and

interests of the people. All he asked was, to a certain extent, a complement of the Toleration Act. Would Churchmen refuse to do what the humblest sect of Dissenters did? Would a body that held the great bulk of the land, boasted of its wealth, and had the seats of learning at its disposal, be the only sect not liberal enough to support its own churches? He believed that these rates could not be maintained, and Mr. Estcourt himself did not believe that any scheme which had been submitted to the House could do anything material to settle this question, except Sir J. Trelawny's. If this question was to be finally settled, he agreed that it ought to be taken up by the Government, who should submit to the House a measure based upon a principle satisfactory to the country, and stake their existence upon it. If they would not do this, then they should abdicate their functions as statesmen, and take their places upon the Treasury bench as superior clerks. Twenty-eight years had not driven off the assailants from this question, and twenty-eight years more would not do it. He implored the House to make this session—in which nothing had yet been done except the spending of money gathered hardly from the people—famous for one thing, namely, the doing to all our neighbours as we would wish them to do to us.

When the division came to be taken, the bill was lost by one vote—286 members voting for the second reading, and 287 against. Mr. Estcourt made an attempt to settle the question by his resolutions, but these were subsequently withdrawn, as was also a scheme for commutation proposed by Mr. Newdegate. But an ever-growing public opinion had condemned Church-rates, and after many abortive attempts at a settlement, the question was finally set at rest by Mr. Gladstone. His Compulsory Church-rate Abolition Bill was passed on the 31st of July 1868; but the chief credit for the removal of this long-standing grievance must be awarded to Sir J. Trelawny, Mr. Bright, and the other indefatigable pioneers in the movement for securing religious equality.

When the session of 1861 opened, the Royal Speech, contrary to expectation, made no mention of Parliamentary Reform. Mr. White accordingly moved an amendment to add a paragraph to the Address on the subject. Mr. Bright, who was amongst those stead-

fast reformers bitterly disappointed at the course of the Government, said he could not express his grief at what had fallen from Lord John Russell on this important subject, and at the tone in which he had treated it. When the present Government came into power, pledges, public and private, had been given on the subject of Reform, of the most explicit character; and he asked the House whether it was right that the representation should be amended or not; and, if right, whether it was not better that it should be done now. Mr. Bright recapitulated very briefly the recent history of the Reform question, reminding the House that in 1831 they were within twenty-four hours of a revolution. And the course which they were now called upon to take was not a safe course. If it was good for those entitled to a vote to be represented, it was not good for that House that they should be permanently excluded. The question could not remain as it was; it must be settled; and he believed that, in this session above all others, a moderate and useful measure of Reform, if the Government were in earnest, might pass both Houses of Parliament. He was giving the House wise counsel, and warning them of dangers which, though regarded as remote, had overtaken statesmen of every country who had neglected them, and had overwhelmed many. Ministers and members ran the risk of losing, first, their own self-respect, and, secondly, the respect of the country; and when that had happened, a more unpleasant and a more unhappy time would have come than could possibly come as the result of such a judicious and moderate measure as might have been passed this session.

Such was the temporary apathy, however, that had overtaken a large majority of the House on this question, that Mr. White's amendment was negatived by 124 to 46.

Mr. Gladstone's Budget for 1861 was brought forward on the 15th of April. The expenditure was estimated at £70,000,000, and the income at £71,823,000, this being the largest estimate of revenue hitherto made. The Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to apply the surplus in the reduction of the income tax by one penny per pound, and to abolish the duty on paper. The first-mentioned reduction would absorb £850,000, and the latter £665,000. The



proposal to abolish the paper duty led to a protracted discussion on the order for going into committee. Mr. Gladstone's propositions were attacked by Mr. Baring, Sir S. Northcote, Mr. S. Fitzgerald, and Mr. Horsman, the last-named member expressing his great regret that the question of the paper duties and the difference with the House of Lords should have been brought on again.

Mr. Bright ably defended the Budget. He complained that Mr. Horsman had endeavoured needlessly to revive a subject which it was obvious there was no wish on the part of many members to have imported into the question before the House. Touching his objection to the combination of the resolutions in one bill, he said Mr. Horsman would find in the journals of Parliament, no further back than 1801, 1802, and 1803, that the House of Commons had repeatedly, and almost constantly, taken the very course the Chancellor of the Exchequer had recommended. As to Mr. Horsman's speech generally, there was not a horror in connection with the public affairs of Europe and the world he had not treated them to. Had he not spoken of dangers worse

‘Than fables yet have feigned or fear conceived—  
Gorgons, and hydras, and chimeras dire’?

If he believed all he had told them, he ought to present a resolution condemning the Government for not entering on an expenditure of £80,000,000 instead of £70,000,000, and should refuse utterly to consider any question of repealing any tax whatsoever. Then there was the hon. member for Huntingdon (Mr. Baring), whom he did not hold to be an authority on financial matters. ‘I have known the hon. gentleman in this House for eighteen years, and it has been my misfortune to have observed that he has always been wrong. Now an authority that is always wrong comes at last to be no authority at all. Everybody knows that *Moore's Almanack*, which is sometimes right, is reckoned to be no authority, except among the ignorant; and I say that the hon. member for Huntingdon, who on these questions has been invariably wrong, cannot be a safe authority for us to follow.’

Discussing the question of the surplus, Mr. Bright said his creed

was always to believe a Chancellor of the Exchequer when he admitted a surplus; he assumed, therefore, that the surplus was a real one; and the question then remaining was whether the remission of duties was judicious and fair to the various interests of the country. The proposed remission went half to direct and half to indirect taxation; and he asked why there should be so much hostility to a particular remission, and whether it was worth while to assail a Chancellor of the Exchequer on this ground merely to gain a party triumph. It had been said that a preference should be given to tea and sugar, but those who said this did not know the real incidence of these taxes. He was as great an enemy to the tea and sugar duties as any one, but he believed that the remission of the paper duties would give a greater relief to the industrious classes than the reduction of the war duties on tea and sugar. Mr. Fitzgerald had asserted that this was a political budget, framed to conciliate him (Mr. Bright). He admitted that it was his budget; he approved and adopted it, and therefore it was his; and in a few days it would be the budget and the policy of the House, because they approved of and would adopt it. The question was whether, in adopting the policy he had recommended, the Chancellor of the Exchequer had gone beyond his duty. Mr. Bright asked whether much of the present security and prosperity of the realm was not fairly to be attributed to the policy and the budgets of the last twenty years, which he had always supported, and which the hon. gentlemen opposite, unhappily for their reputation, had always opposed? And he closed his speech with this peroration, interesting from the personal point of view:—

‘Sir, I have seen a good deal of party contest in this House. I have no objection to the greatest efforts of the greatest party, if those efforts are guided by an honest desire for the public good; but I observe that these party contests are generally fought in a field which, as one of our own writers and poets has described it, is “a field of ambition in which truly the labourers are many, but the harvest is scarcely worth the carrying away.” I despise those triumphs. I scorn altogether those laurels. (Cheers.) If I contended here for the mastery, if I looked for fame, if I desired to be remembered hereafter in connection with the great struggles on the floor of this House, it should be by associating my name directly with measures which I felt in my conscience it was wise and just in Parliament to give, and which it would be a blessing for the people to receive. (Loud cheers.) Sir, I have looked at this

budget, I hope, with an impartial and an honest eye. I believe that it meets these two conditions—that it is just for Parliament to pass, and that it will be beneficent towards the people for whom it is intended; and on these grounds alone I shall give it my hearty support.’ (Cheers.)

The House ultimately went into committee, and on the 6th of May Mr. Gladstone formally announced his intention of including all the chief financial propositions in one bill. He was acrimoniously attacked for this policy by Lord Robert Cecil and other members, but supported in his decision by such high authorities on Parliamentary procedure as Sir James Graham, Sir William Heathcote, and Mr. Walpole. The Government carried their propositions, and the paper duty controversy was finally disposed of on the 12th of July, when the Royal assent was given to the bill repealing the Excise duty on paper.

Mr. Bright entered a protest this year against the Navy Estimates. In introducing these estimates on the 11th of March, Lord Clarence Paget urged upon the House the necessity of proceeding at once with the construction of iron-cased vessels similar to the French *La Gloire* and the English *Warrior*. Mr. Bright said he firmly believed that the French fleet had been prodigiously over-rated, and that alarms had been raised upon the foundation of monstrous falsehoods. He would be the last man to charge the noble lord with endeavouring to create a false impression; but such was the effect of official life that a man somehow took colour from the atmosphere he lived in. The Treasury bench seemed to be not ‘the bourne from which no traveller returns,’ but the bourne from which no honest man returned. Neither Lord Palmerston nor any of his colleagues had made a distinct statement on this question. ‘They do not condescend to particularise on this matter, but they allow these alarms to exist and these assertions to circulate throughout the country. They make use of them for the purpose of seizing on a time of popular delusion to add to the Navy and to the expenditure of the country. Instead of that, if they were to tell the people the truth, and to lay before them the real state of the facts, which they know—which I am convinced that they know—which to my certain knowledge their own officers send to them from Paris,—

they might have saved millions during the last few years. There is not a man in Paris, whether Bonapartist, Orleanist, or Republican, who does not entirely disbelieve and disavow all the statements made in this House and this country as to the gigantic naval preparations of France, and the disposition of its Government towards England. Surely, after what was done in consequence of the panic excited when the right hon. member for Droitwich (Sir John Pakington) was at the Admiralty, and considering that this is a time of peculiar pressure, when a general discontent is arising in different parts of the country at this enormous expenditure, the Government might easily have reduced the military estimates of the year by four or five millions! And I do not believe there is a man in the kingdom, with the slightest knowledge of politics, who could imagine that we were not quite as safe as we shall be when all this money has been voted.' Mr. Bright added that Lord Palmerston, who had disappointed the country and his supporters in that House in some things, might with credit to his Government and satisfaction to the country have touched the estimates with a bolder hand.

In his reply, Lord Palmerston could only plead the necessity for keeping our navy ahead of that of the French, but this was sufficient at the time for a House excited by the alleged enormous increase in the French navy, and the money was voted by a large majority.

## CHAPTER XIX.

*AMERICA AND THE CIVIL WAR.*

Mr. Bright and the United States.—Secession of Southern States.—Outbreak of the Civil War.—Neutrality of England.—The Affair of the *Trent*.—Surrender of Messrs. Slidell and Mason.—Mr. Bright on the American Struggle.—The Duty of England.—The Cotton Famine.—Debate on the Affair of the *Trent*.—The Condition of International Law.—Mr. Bright at Birmingham.—Speech on the War and the Supply of Cotton.—He justifies the Policy of the North.—Slavery and the South.—Birmingham Chamber of Commerce.—Speeches of Messrs. Scholefield and Bright.—Meeting at Rochdale.—Northern Sympathy with the Distress in Lancashire.—Speech of Mr. Bright.—Meeting on the American Question in 1863.—Mr. Bright at St. James's Hall.—At the London Tavern.—Debates in the House of Commons.—Mr. Roebuck's Motion for recognising the Southern Confederacy.—Eloquent Speech by Mr. Bright.—Public Breakfast to Mr. Lloyd Garrison.—A noble band of Abolitionists.—Appreciation of Mr. Bright's Defence of the Northern Cause.—President Lincoln's Staff bequeathed to Mr. Bright.



O statesman of eminence has ever spoken in such unstintedly generous terms of the United States as Mr. Bright. He has watched the growth and development of the American Union with peculiar interest ; and from the tenor of his convictions and opinions, he has naturally regarded with admiration the free institutions of that great Republic. But he has done more than this. Mr. Bright was the steadfast friend of America in the moment of her deepest peril ; and when many English statesmen were predicting the dissolution of the Union at the time of the Civil War, Mr. Bright never lost faith in the future of America, but stood forward as the uncompromising champion of the cause of the North. We know now how that struggle ended ; although the North fought

in the outset for union, and not emancipation, yet, had the South been victorious, the hateful institution of slavery would still be flourishing, and the triumph of freedom might have been delayed for many generations.

The shadow of the coming struggle between the Northern and Southern portions of the United States was felt before the commencement of the year 1861. Towards the close of the preceding year South Carolina had led the way in seceding from the Union, and in the course of two or three weeks her example was followed by Mississippi and several other important States. The conflict now began. The attitude of England was regarded with keen interest, but the Government discountenanced debates which might tend to compromise the neutrality of the country. On being consulted, the law officers of the Crown decided that the Southern States must be treated as belligerent. It was resolved, however, that the policy of England should remain strictly neutral, and in May 1861, a proclamation was issued announcing such neutrality, and forbidding all British subjects from aiding either side, directly or indirectly. Orders were issued to prohibit armed ships of the belligerents from carrying their prizes into any British port; and it was resolved to despatch a force of three thousand men for the protection of Canada. Even at this early period there were those in England who called for the recognition of the Confederate States, and much excitement prevailed throughout the country. Speaking at a meeting at Rochdale on the 1st of August, Mr. Bright referred to the loss of cotton as a result of the war, and said that the safety of the product on which the county of Lancashire depended rested far more on the success of the Washington Government than upon its failure. On the general question, he held that the Union must be maintained; and observed that the people of England, if they were true to their sympathies, to their own history, and to their great act of 1834, would have no sympathy with those who desired to build up a great empire on the perpetual bondage of millions of their fellow-men.

On the 7th of November 1861, an incident occurred which nearly led to a war between England and the United States. It

appeared that the *Trent*, a packet belonging to the British Mail Steamship Company, and being therefore a neutral vessel, had taken on board at Havannah (a neutral port) four passengers who were envoys from the Confederate States to London and Paris. They embarked, however, simply as private passengers. On the date above mentioned the ship was stopped in the old Bahama Channel by the United States' steamer *San Jacinto*, commanded by Captain Wilkes, who demanded to see the list of the passengers. This was refused, and he then announced that his orders were to take Messrs. Slidell and Mason, and their companions, who were known to be on board. They were taken by force on board the *San Jacinto*, in spite of their own protest and that of the British Admiralty agent, Commander Williams, R.N. A curious international question arose, and war was imminent between the two countries; but eventually the Commissioners were surrendered, when it was found that the British Government would accept no compromise. Great irritation ensued on both sides, but the prospect of war happily passed away.

At this time Mr. Bright attended a banquet given to him by his fellow-townsmen of Rochdale, who were anxious for an exposition of his opinions on the civil war generally, and on the duty of England in respect thereto. Having made acknowledgment of the kindness of his reception, Mr. Bright remarked upon the war struggles which had recently taken place in Europe, and then said: 'Now our eyes are turned in a contrary direction, and we look to the West. There we see a struggle in progress of the very highest interest to England and to humanity at large. We see there a nation which I shall call the Transatlantic English nation—the inheritor and partaker of all the historic glories of this country. We see it torn with intestine broils, and suffering from calamities from which for more than a century past—in fact, for more than two centuries past—this country has been exempt. That struggle is of special interest to us. We remember the description which one of our great poets gives of Rome,—

"Lone mother of dead empires."

But England is the living mother of great nations on the American and on the Australian continents, which promise to endow the world with all her knowledge and all her civilisation, and even with something more than the freedom she herself enjoys.'

He then traced the progress of the United States, and the history of the slave question, and showed, from the superior position and advantages of the Southern States in the Union, that the present insurrection was a wicked one. The maintenance of a high tariff was not the cause of the revolt; it was really the question of slavery. For thirty years it had constantly been coming to the surface, disturbing social life, and overthrowing almost all political harmony in the working of the United States. The object of the South was to escape from the majority, who wished to limit the area of slavery. The Slave States offered themselves for the recognition of a Christian nation, based upon the foundation, the unchangeable foundation in their eyes, of slavery and barbarism.

What was the course which England would be expected to pursue? We should be neutral as far as regards mingling in the strife. We were neutral in the strife in Italy, but we were not neutral in opinion and sympathy; and the feeling in Italy was that the opinion of England was potent in Europe, and did much for the creation of the Italian kingdom. Mr. Bright spoke with commendation of the speeches of the Duke of Argyll and Lord Stanley on the question of neutrality. Lord John Russell, too, had spoken out; but there were other speeches made to which he would not refer, out of pity for the men who uttered them. Coming to the press, he instanced the *Times* as not having, since Mr. Lincoln took office, published one fair and honourable and friendly article on American affairs. Now, he had never stood forth as the advocate of war, but on this question it was well that principles should be understood. The *Times* advocated separation in America; but if an insurrection arose in Ireland it would describe with glee and exultation the manner in which the insurrectionists were cut down and made an end of. Mr. Bright wanted to know whether it had ever been admitted by politicians, or statesmen, or people, that a great nation could be broken up at any time by any particular



section of any part of that nation ; and he went on to show, from the survey of the American States, the impossibility of secession being tolerated. Dealing with another argument of which we heard much, Mr. Bright said there could not be a meaner motive than that it was better for ourselves that the United States should be severed, and that the North America continent should be as the continent of Europe is, in many States, and subject to all the contentions and disasters which have accompanied the history of the States of Europe. ‘I should say that, if a man had a great heart within him, he would rather look forward to the day when, from that point of land which is habitable nearest to the Pole, to the shores of the Great Gulf, the whole of that vast continent might become one grand confederation of States,—without a great army, and without a great navy,—not mixing itself up with the entanglements of European politics,—without a custom-house inside, through the whole length and breadth of its territory,—and with freedom everywhere, equality everywhere, law everywhere, peace everywhere,—such a confederation would afford at least some hope that man is not forsaken of Heaven, and that the future of our race may be better than the past.’ It was said that the Americans were irritable, which was very likely, seeing that they were involved in a great struggle, the like of which had not been before in their or in any history. No country in the world was ever more entitled to sympathy and forbearance than the United States at that moment. We had papers endeavouring to poison the mind of England against the North ; and they had papers, like the *New York Herald*, endeavouring to provoke mischief between the Government in Washington and the Government in London.

Mr. Bright next referred to the discourtesy of our Foreign Minister towards Mr. Adams, the American representative, in not delaying until his arrival the issue of the proclamation of neutrality, so that it might at least have seemed a friendly act, and thus have obviated all the unpleasantness which had occurred. He was obliged to say that there had not been that friendly and cordial neutrality on the part of England which he should have expected had he been a citizen of the United States. With regard to the

affair of the *Trent*, Mr. Bright pronounced the act both impolitic and bad, though he did not understand the law, which was very unsettled. 'I think it may turn out, almost certainly, that, so far as the taking of those men from that ship was concerned, it was an act wholly unknown to, and unauthorised by, the American Government. And if the American Government believe, on the opinion of their law officers, that the act is illegal, I have no doubt they will make fitting reparation; for there is no Government in the world that has so strenuously insisted upon modifications of international law, and been so anxious to be guided always by the most moderate and merciful interpretation of that law.'

But Mr. Bright begged Englishmen to be calm on this matter, to take no notice of those who clamoured for war before we had heard a word from the American Government, and to remember how we were dragged into the Russian war. The hon. gentleman then brought his address to this effective conclusion:—

'At this very moment, then, there are millions in the United States who personally, or whose immediate parents, have at one time been citizens of this country. They found a home in the Far West; they subdued the wilderness; they met with plenty there, which was not afforded them in their native country; and they have become a great people. There may be persons in England who are jealous of those States; there may be men who dislike democracy, and who hate a republic; there may be even those whose sympathies warm towards the slave oligarchy of the South; but of this I am certain, that only misrepresentation the most gross, or calumny the most wicked, can sever the tie which unites the great mass of the people of this country with their friends and brethren beyond the Atlantic.

'Now, whether the Union will be restored or not, or the South achieve an unhonoured independence or not, I know not, and I predict not. But this I think I know—that in a few years, a very few years, the twenty millions of freemen in the North will be thirty millions, or even fifty millions—a population equal to or exceeding that of this kingdom. When that time comes, I pray that it may not be said amongst them that, in the darkest hour of their country's trials, England, the land of their fathers, looked on with icy coldness, and saw unmoved the perils and calamities of their children. As for me, I have but this to say: I am but one in this audience, and but one in the citizenship of this country; but if all other tongues are silent, mine shall speak for that policy which gives hope to the bondsmen of the South, and which tends to generous thoughts, and generous words, and generous deeds, between the two great nations who speak the English language, and from their origin are alike entitled to the English name.'

Mr. Bright had prophesied the cotton famine in 1847, and again in 1850, and alluded to this when he spoke at a banquet of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce on the 4th of February 1862. 'It was no long-sightedness,' he observed, 'to say or to see what would result, for I took it for granted every man must have known that, in a country the constitution of which declared as its cardinal point that all men are equal, the institution of slavery, by one means or other, must at some period come to an end, and that the organisation of labour in the Southern States of America must at least for a time be interfered with, if not wholly broken up.' He therefore recommended that we should turn our attention to India, with the view of extending the growth there; but nothing had been done. As a natural consequence, the collapse of the cotton supply was now terribly felt in Lancashire. Half a million workmen in Lancashire were deprived of support. The widespread distress, however, was nobly borne; and the Cotton Famine Fund, which was now inaugurated, testified to the great and spontaneous liberality of all classes. The calamity called forth the heroism and endurance and all the finer qualities of the working population of Lancashire, and their demeanour in this unparalleled crisis elicited the warmest admiration at home and abroad.

The affair of the *Trent* was of course discussed in the House of Commons in the session of 1862, and Mr. Bright took the opportunity of expressing his opinion upon the conduct of Her Majesty's Government in reference to that affair. He commented on the great inconsistency between the despatches of the Foreign Office and the preparations of certain other departments with regard to the recent transaction. 'It is not customary,' he said, 'in ordinary life, for a person to send a messenger with a polite message to a friend, or a neighbour, or acquaintance, and at the same time to send a man of portentous strength, wielding a gigantic club, and making every kind of ferocious gesticulation, and still to profess that all this is done in the most friendly and courteous manner.' Such, however, had been the conduct of our Government; 'and the result was that a million of money had been wasted—more than wasted,—for the general paralysis, throughout all the ramifications of our commerce, caused

by the warlike preparations of the Government, had already been productive of the most pernicious results. The affair of the *Trent* was nothing but an unhappy accident, and no one knew that better than Lord Palmerston himself.

The Premier replied to the effect that if he had pocketed the insult, a feeling of ineradicable irritation would have been produced in this country, which would have been far more dangerous to the prospects of peace than any feelings engendered by the recent conduct of the Government. There the matter dropped; but some time later Mr. Horsfall brought forward a resolution, 'That the present state of international maritime law, as affecting the rights of belligerents and neutrals, is ill-defined and unsatisfactory, and calls for the early attention of Her Majesty's Government.' The motion was opposed by the Attorney-General, who regarded the law as quite clear and well understood. Mr. Bright observed that the motion had been drawn up in its present form in order that the Government might accept it, for it did not pledge them to anything, but left them to take whatever proceedings they might think advisable hereafter. The Government had been blamed for the course they took in 1856; but he was of opinion that it was necessary and proper, and could not be avoided. But under the Declaration of Paris great injury would result to belligerents in time of war. We had agreed to make war less burdensome to ourselves and to an enemy, but we had done it in such a manner as to inflict very grievous injury upon a great and important class. What did Mr. Horsfall propose?—to include the ship as well as the goods,—a proposition which logically followed the other, and the effect of which would be to render war remote and unfrequent. Arguing from the vast number of captures of British vessels in the short war with America in 1812-14, when our tonnage was only 3,500,000, Mr. Bright asked what would be the injury to British commerce when our tonnage had grown to twelve or thirteen millions. It would not be possible to resist this proposition ultimately, and other countries were already in favour of it. After a lengthy debate, the motion was withdrawn, Mr. Horsfall expressing himself satisfied with the discussion it had elicited.

The two great and pressing questions, the war and the supply of cotton, were dealt with very fully by Mr. Bright in a speech delivered at Birmingham on the 18th of December 1862. He began by an inquiry into the growth of cotton in India, showing that in 1818 the quantity we received from the East actually exceeded that which we received from the 'United States. But after that there was a great decay in the cotton trade of Western India, and he had moved for an inquiry into the subject. 'My argument is this, and my assertion is this,' said Mr. Bright, 'that the growth of cotton in India,—the growth of an article which was native and common in India before America was discovered by Europeans,—that the growth of that article has been systematically injured, strangled, and destroyed by the stupid and wicked policy of the Indian Government.' But although Parliamentary committees had sat, and evidence had been taken entirely condemnatory of the whole system of the Indian Government with regard to the land and agricultural produce, nothing had been done. The hon. gentleman detailed at length the strenuous efforts he had made for many years in connection with this question, and again expressed an opinion he had before uttered in the House of Commons, that there should be five or six independent Presidencies in India, with a first-class engineer in each Presidency, and an efficient staff whose business it should be to determine what public works should be carried on, some by the Government and some by private companies. He believed that ten years of such judicious labours would work an entire revolution in the condition of India.

What was now their present position? The quantity of cotton in the United States was much less than people believed, and there was a high probability that there would never be another considerable crop, or one available for the English manufactories, from slave labour in America. All other sources of supply, except India, could not send us the enormous quantity which would be required if the crop from the United States failed. If the Government would exempt from the land tax for a period all land in India which during that time should grow cotton, the stimulus would be enormous. The loss to the revenue would be something, but the deliverance to





Lancashire would perhaps be complete. Short of this, he looked upon the restoration of the prosperity of Lancashire as distant.

Mr. Bright next spoke of the sad tragedy passing before the eyes of the people in the United States. He rapidly sketched the course of public opinion in England from the moment when the secession of the Cotton States was announced. At first feeling was against the South; then, when it was said the North was paralysed and unprepared, it was thought that the North would acquiesce in the rending of the Republic, and that there would be no war. Public writers also in this country said that the contest was hopeless. He (Mr. Bright) justified the North. President Lincoln was fairly and honestly elected, and after the raising of a hundred thousand men, and other steps taken by the Southern leaders, the President was justified in calling out seventy-five thousand men for the purpose of maintaining the integrity of that nation, which was the main purpose of the oath he had taken at his election. As to the object of the war, no man could doubt that the South began it on their part to maintain in bondage four millions of human beings. He wanted to ask, therefore, whether this was to be the foundation, as proposed, of a new slave empire, and whether it was intended that on this audacious and infernal basis England's new ally was to be built up. 'I want to know who they are who speak eagerly in favour of England becoming the ally and friend of this great conspiracy against human nature.' It was not that he had an objection to recognise a country because it held slaves; but in this case it was a new State setting itself up on the sole basis of slavery. Slavery was blasphemously declared to be its chief corner-stone. Ministers of State, the aristocracy, and others, were divided on this question, but the great body of the people of this country would never sympathise with a revolt which was intended to destroy the liberty of a continent, and to build on its ruins a mighty fabric of human bondage. Mr. Bright again replied to the argument that the Republic was too great and too powerful for us, and that the North did not like us. With regard to the *Alabama*, having gone into the facts, he did not so much blame the language that had been used in America in reference to that matter. Every



effort that money and malice could make to stimulate in Lancashire, amongst the suffering population, an expression of opinion in favour of the Slave States had failed. Mr. Bright closed with this eloquent peroration, which is justly regarded as one of his finest and happiest efforts :—

‘I blame men who are eager to admit into the family of nations a State which offers itself to us, based upon a principle, I will undertake to say, more odious and more blasphemous than was ever heretofore dreamed of in Christian or Pagan, in civilised or in savage times. The leader of this revolt proposes this monstrous thing—that over a territory forty times as large as England, the blight and curse of slavery shall be for ever perpetuated. I cannot believe, for my part, that such a fate will befall that fair land, stricken though it now is with the ravages of war. I cannot believe that civilisation, in its journey with the sun, will sink into endless night in order to gratify the ambition of the leaders of this revolt, who seek to

“Wade through slaughter to a throne,  
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind.”

I have another and a far brighter vision before my gaze. It may be but a vision, but I will cherish it. I see one vast confederation stretching from the frozen North in unbroken line to the glowing South, and from the wild billows of the Atlantic westward to the calmer waters of the Pacific main,—and I see one people, and one language, and one law, and one faith, and, over all that wide continent, the home of freedom, and a refuge for the oppressed of every race and of every clime.’

The second anniversary dinner of the Birmingham Chamber of Commerce was held on the 15th of January, 1863, and both members for the borough were present. Mr. Scholefield advocated the practice of capturing the unarmed vessels of a belligerent, on the grounds that such a proceeding checked war, by enlisting mercantile interests against it; and, moreover, that such a practice crippled an enemy’s resources, thereby bringing war to a speedy termination. The senior member also described the emancipation proclamation of President Lincoln as ‘a gigantic confiscation of property,’ alleging that it came within the same category as the prize capture of merchant vessels. Mr. Bright, in following Mr. Scholefield, referred first to the unsatisfactory condition of international law. We ought to look forward, with a view to progress, rather than to make a retrograde step in the interpretation of international law as between belligerents. On this question, and

also on the question of blockade, his opinion was that it was the interest of all nations, and especially of England, to render their military policy more humane and more in accordance with the moral code. England was the only power that opposed these alterations. After alluding to our proposed cession of the Ionian Islands to Greece, and to the growth of a sound opinion throughout the world upon international rights, Mr. Bright said, with perhaps pardonable egotism, 'Many things which I advocate are thought rather foolish at first, but in time people come up to them, and I have the satisfaction of being a little ahead of the Government, and often of the nation.' Discussing the question of Gibraltar, to which he had alluded on a previous occasion, the hon. gentleman said that it would surely be a great advantage to us to have a close ally and friend in Spain; but that we could never have, so long as we held a portion of her territory, taken from her and kept from her under circumstances reflecting no honour upon England, especially when it was almost universally admitted that the Rock was of no use whatever to ourselves. Mr. Bright next alluded to the suffering in Lancashire, expressing his pleasure that the working men of Birmingham had subscribed £3000 towards the Relief Fund. He was only sorry that every one of the men who thus nobly subscribed had not his name on the register of electors, and was not enabled to give his free vote at the poll. He then showed, with regard to the paralysis in the cotton industry, and the consumption of all the cotton that was available except that which was locked up in the United States, that an immediate armistice and the cessation of the war with a view to negotiation would produce a great fall and a great ruin. This apprehension necessarily interfered very much with the course of business. Mr. Gladstone's speech at Newcastle, and the Foreign Minister's speech in connection with the war, had exercised a disastrous influence; and then there was the incessant folly and malice poured out every day in the columns of the *Times*. But notwithstanding all, the world was moving on. 'I see from the East unto the West,' he remarked, 'from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, in spite of what misled, prejudiced, unjust, and wicked men may do, the cause of freedom still moving onward;

and it is not in human power to arrest its progress.' There was much to be done in our own country, but if men examined questions fairly, and decided upon them truthfully, shunning party spirit, we might have hope that we should do much to elevate our people, to improve our institutions, to make broader and safer the foundations of our freedom, and to build up and preserve a commonwealth which should do much to help forward the advancement of the world.'

A few days after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright attended a meeting at Rochdale, called by the Mayor, Mr. G. L. Ashworth, for the purpose of passing resolutions of thanks to the merchants and citizens of New York for their sympathy with the sufferings of the unemployed workpeople of Lancashire, and for their munificent contributions to the Relief Fund. Mr. Bright said, 'I regard this transmission of assistance from the United States as a proof that the world moves onward in the direction of a better time. It is an evidence that, whatever may be the faults of ambitious men, and sometimes, may I not say, the crimes of Governments, the peoples are drawing together, and beginning to learn that it never was intended that they should be hostile to each other, but that every nation should take a brotherly interest in every other nation in the world.' There was a little jealousy between some persons in our own country and some portions of the people in the United States. But why should this be? Their language and literature were the same; their laws had the same basis as ours; their form of Government was not very dissimilar in essence from our own constitution, though our House of Commons was not as full and fair and free a representation of the people as was the House of Representatives at Washington. The influence of the great example of the United States had been perceptible in Europe. Touching upon the great emigration from this country to America, Mr. Bright said there was not much hope in England for the workmen, whereas in the United States hope prevailed everywhere; 'everywhere there is an open career; there is no privileged class; there is complete education extended to all; and every man feels that he is not born to be in penury and in

suffering, but that there is 'no point in the social ladder to which he may not fairly hope to raise himself by his honest efforts.'

But that country was now the scene of one of the greatest calamities that could afflict mankind; and he showed that the question which was being tried was not merely whether four millions of slaves in America should be free, but whether the vast number of slaves in Cuba and Brazil should also be liberated. But further, the freedom of men of all races was involved in this great strife, and Mr. Bright cited extracts from Southern writers and speakers to prove that the freedom of white men even was not safe in the hands of the Southerners. He reiterated his opinion, based upon Southern utterances as regarded slavery, that the great strife had its origin in an infamous conspiracy against the rights of human nature. Their doctrine was the doctrine of devils, and not of men; and all mankind should shudder at the enormity of the guilt which the leaders of the conspiracy had brought upon that country.

Mr. Bright went on to show, from the papers of the South, that both before and after the secession the universal opinion of the Southerners was that the stoppage of the supply of cotton would be our instantaneous ruin, and that if they could only lay hold of it, keep it back in the country, or burn it, so that it never could be used, that then the people of Lancashire—merchants, manufacturers, and operatives in mills—everybody dependent upon this vast industry—would immediately arise and protest against the English Government abstaining for one moment from the recognition of the South, from war with the North, and from a resolution to do the utmost that we could to create a slaveholding independent republic in the South. These men had sent their envoys to this country, and the latter had been received by some as though they came from the most honourable Government, and with the most honourable mission. Slave-owners, buyers, sellers, and breeders asked Englishmen—Englishmen with a history of freedom—to join hands in their atrocious conspiracy. Some of our statesmen and some of our newspapers had been wrong upon this question; but the working men of England, and the great body of the middle classes too, had not been wrong. Witness the great meetings in

London, Manchester, and elsewhere. Public opinion had not changed, but men were learning more about it every day. What shall we say with regard to this great question? asked Mr. Bright; and he furnished the answer in this eloquent passage, which formed the conclusion of his address:—

‘I do not believe it is possible to be strictly, coldly neutral. The question at issue is too great, the contest is too grand in the eye of the world. It is impossible for any man who can have an opinion worth anything on any question, not to have some kind of an opinion on the question of this war. I am not ashamed of my opinion, or the sympathy which I feel, and have over and over again expressed, on the side of the free North. I cannot understand how any man witnessing what is enacting on the American continent can indulge in small cavils against the free people of the North, and close his eye entirely to the enormity of the purposes of the South. I cannot understand how any Englishman, who in past years has been accustomed to say that “there was one foul blot upon the fair fame of the American Republic,” can now express any sympathy for those who would perpetuate and extend that blot. And, more, if we profess to be, though it be with imperfect and faltering steps, the followers of Him who declared it to be His Divine mission “to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,” must we not reject with indignation and scorn the proffered alliance and friendship with a power based on human bondage, and which contemplates the overthrow and the extinction of the dearest rights of the most helpless of mankind?’

‘If we are the friends of freedom, personal and political,—and we all profess to be so, and most of us, more or less, are striving after it more completely for our own country,—how can we withhold our sympathy from a Government and a people amongst whom white men have always been free, and who are now offering an equal freedom to the black? I advise you not to believe in the “destruction” of the American nation. If facts should happen by any chance to force you to believe it, do not commit the crime of wishing it. I do not blame men who draw different conclusions from mine from the facts, and who believe that the restoration of the Union is impossible. As the facts lie before our senses, so must we form a judgment on them. But I blame those men who wish for such a catastrophe. For myself, I have never despaired, and I will not despair. In the language of one of our old poets, who wrote, I think, more than three hundred years ago, I will not despair,—

“For I have seen a ship in haven fall,  
After the storm had broke both mast and shroud.”

From the very outburst of this great convulsion, I have had but one hope and one faith, and it is this—that the result of this stupendous strife may be to make freedom the heritage for ever of a whole continent, and that the grandeur and the prosperity of the American Union may never be impaired.’

There was no cessation of the meetings, either in the metropolis

or the provinces, on the American question. On the 20th of March, a meeting of the Trades Unionists of London was held in St. James's Hall, to express sympathy with the Northern States of America, and in furtherance of the cause of negro emancipation. Mr. Bright presided, and was supported by Mr. Stansfeld, M.P., Mr. P. A. Taylor, M.P., Mr. John Stuart Mill, Professor Beesly, the Rev. Newman Hall, and others. In the course of his opening speech, Mr. Bright said that some persons and some writers thought it no great matter which had caused this contest in the United States. He maintained that a whole continent was at stake, with its teeming millions, and their present and future fate. What were the sympathies of England, and especially what was the interest in this contest of the men before him? Privilege, with blatant voice, had cursed the American Republic; privilege had beheld an affecting spectacle for many years past. 'It has beheld,' continued Mr. Bright, 'thirty millions of men, happy and prosperous, without emperor, without king, without the surroundings of a court, without nobles, except such as are made by eminence in intellect and virtue, without State bishops and State priests,—

"Sole venders of the lore which works salvation,"—

without great armies and great navies, without great debt and without great taxes. Privilege has shuddered at what might happen to old Europe if this grand experiment should succeed. But you, the workers,—you, striving after a better time,—you, struggling upwards towards the light, with slow and painful steps,—you have no cause to look with jealousy upon a country which, amongst all the great nations of the globe, is that one where labour has met with the highest honour, and where it has reaped its greatest reward. Are you aware of the fact that in fifteen years, which is but as yesterday when it is past, two and a half millions of your countrymen have found a home in the United States,—that a population equal nearly, if not quite, to the population of this great city—itsself equal to no mean kingdom—has emigrated from these shores? In the United States there has been, as you know, an open door for every man,—and millions have entered into it, and have found rest.'

After comparing the two sections of the United States engaged in the struggle, the speaker remarked that the whole question was one most fitting for discussion by the trade societies of London. It was said that trade would be ruined ; but if the South began the war, could we be their friends ? If they had destroyed cotton, or withheld it, could we therefore take them to our bosoms ? Cotton had been withheld from this country with the single object of creating in the manufacturing districts of France and England a state of suffering that might at last become unbearable, and thus compel the Governments of those countries to take sides with the South against the North. He was sorry to believe that many Englishmen had taken portions of the loan being raised on behalf of the Southern Confederacy, whose great object was to pay in this country for such vessels as the *Alabama*. It was hoped that so much irritation would arise in consequence in the minds of the people of the Northern States that England might be dragged into war to take sides with the South and with slavery. Mr. Bright held that the question was so plain that most Englishmen must understand it, and in concluding said : ‘ I wish you to be true to yourselves. Dynasties may fall, aristocracies may perish, privilege will vanish into the dim past ; but you, your children, and your children’s children, will remain, and from you the English people will be continued to succeeding generations. You wish the freedom of your country. You wish it for yourselves. You strive for it in many ways. Do not then give the hand of fellowship to the worst foes of freedom that the world has ever seen ; and do not, I beseech you, bring down a curse upon your cause which no after-penitence can ever lift from it. You will not do this. I have faith in you. Impartial history will tell that, when your statesmen were hostile or coldly neutral, when many of your rich men were corrupt, when your press—which ought to have instructed and defended—was mainly written to betray, the fate of a continent and of its vast population being in peril, you clung to freedom with an unfaltering trust that God in His infinite mercy will yet make it the heritage of all His children.’

Another public meeting was held on the 16th of June, at the London Tavern, convened by the Union and Emancipation Society,

the object being to hear an address from Mr. M. D. Conway. Mr. Bright took the chair, and spoke at some length upon the war, tracing the course of English feeling in regard to it. With respect to the supply of cotton, he said that we had been carrying on a prodigious industry upon a most insecure foundation. He maintained that with a supply of cotton mainly derived from the Southern States, and raised by slave labour, two things were indisputable—first, that the supply must always be insufficient; and, secondly, that it must always be insecure. He adduced facts and statistics in support of these positions. The slave power had now rushed into the battle-field to settle this great question; and having chosen war, it was from day to day sinking to inevitable ruin under it. Was it not possible that the vast cotton industry of Lancashire, with all its interests of capital and labour, which had hitherto been standing on a menacing volcano, might hereafter be placed upon a rock which nothing could disturb? Again, with regard to the United States, once abolish slavery in the South, and the whole of the country would be open to the enterprise and the industry of all. There would be a migration from the North to the beautiful regions of the South. In the course of ten years there would be a rapid increase in the growth of cotton; and not only would its growth be rapid, but its permanent increase would be secured. Mr. Bright expressed a hope that in future all who loved freedom here would hold converse with all who loved freedom in America, and that the two nations, which came of one stock, might be united in soul, and work together for the advancement of the liberties and the happiness of mankind.

But Mr. Bright never spoke with greater force or more earnest emphasis on this important and, at the time, all-absorbing question, than he did in the House of Commons on the occasion of Mr. Roebuck's motion for the recognition of the Southern Confederacy, which was brought forward on the 30th of June, 1863. The mover of this resolution had shown himself a bitter enemy of the North, and in pressing the House of Commons to adopt his motion, he said his only fear was lest the independence of the South should be established without us. As far as his influence went, he was determined to do all he could to prevent the reconstruction of the Union.



Lord Palmerston being absent from the House in consequence of indisposition, the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Gladstone) defended the policy of the Government, and said that, although he was most anxious that the contest in America should be brought to an end, he did not believe recognition of the South would accomplish it, while it would produce reaction in the North.

Mr. Bright's speech was one of the finest displays of almost impromptu oratory ever listened to in the House of Commons. It was alike remarkable in sarcasm and in eloquence of a very lofty order, and it absolutely tore Mr. Roebuck's address into tatters. The speaker's denunciation of Mr. Roebuck himself, also, was a thing never to be forgotten by those who listened to it. Mr. Bright first took up the story of Mr. Roebuck's interview with the Emperor of the French, observing that he asked us to accept that Sovereign's lead on one of the greatest questions ever submitted to the British Parliament. He went on to show that Mr. Roebuck had not always had this friendly regard for the French Emperor, but had on more than one occasion denounced his bad faith. Though the hon. and learned gentleman had been laughed at, he still adopted the patriotic character of 'Tear 'em,' and was still at his post. If he (Mr. Bright) was not mistaken, Mr. Roebuck had once said, referring to the salutation between the Emperor of the French and the Queen of these kingdoms, 'I saw his perjured lips touch that hallowed cheek.'

'France,' continued Mr. Bright, 'if not wise in this matter, is at least not unfriendly. The hon. and learned member, in my opinion—indeed I am sure—is not friendly, and I believe he is not wise.' The speaker then grew sarcastic upon the revelations of policy made by these new Ministers, these envoys most extraordinary (Mr. Roebuck and Mr. W. S. Lindsay), in connection with the Emperor Napoleon. In his (Mr. Bright's) opinion, Mr. Roebuck would help to break up a friendly nation, and create an everlasting breach between the two nations, because he deemed it for the interest of England. Coming to the proposition made, the hon. member for Birmingham affirmed that the whole case rested either upon a miserable jealousy or a base fear. There was never a state in the world which was less capable of aggression with regard to Europe than

the United States of America. Besides, the party which had elected Mr. Lincoln to office was a moral and peaceable party—while the hon. gentleman would throw the weight of England into the scale in favour of the cause of slavery. He (the speaker) looked at the interest of England from a different point of view. He believed the war was likely more than anything else to abolish slavery. The supply of cotton under the system of slavery must always be insecure; and it was the interest of England that the supply of cotton should be by free labour rather than by that of slaves. With regard to the political aspect of the question, the more he considered this war, the more improbable he thought it that the United States would be broken up into separate republics. The conclusion to which he had come was that, if there should be a separation, the interests, the sympathies, and the necessities, perhaps the ambition of the whole continent, were such that it would be reunited under a central government. It was possible that they might prefer the union of their whole country upon the basis of the South, and then we should have a great State built up upon slavery and war, instead of that free State to which he looked, built up upon an educated people, upon general freedom, and upon morality in government.

Mr. Bright next spoke upon the morality of the question and the horrors of war. The Chancellor of the Exchequer had referred to the carnage which was occasioned by this lamentable strife; but carnage was the accompaniment of all war, and more lives had been lost during the invasion of the Crimea than had hitherto been lost in the American war. Then followed this passage, one of the most stirring and pathetic in all the speeches of Mr. Bright:—

‘Now I will ask the right hon. gentleman the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and those who are of opinion with him on this question of slaughter in the American war—a slaughter which I hope there is no hon. member here, and no person out of this House, that does not in his calm moments look upon with grief and horror—to consider what was the state of things before the war. It was this: that every year in the Slave States of America there were born into the world one hundred and fifty thousand children—born with the badge and the doom of slavery—born to the liability by law, and by custom, and by the devilish cupidity of man—to the lash and to the chain and to the branding-iron, and to be taken from their families and carried they know not where.

‘I want to know whether you feel as I feel upon this question. When I can get down to my home from this House, I find half a dozen little children playing upon my hearth. How many members are there who can say with me, that the most innocent, the most pure, the most holy joy which in their past years they have felt, or in their future years they have hoped for, has not arisen from contact and association with our precious children? Well, then, if that be so—if, when the hand of death takes one of those flowers from our dwelling, our heart is overwhelmed with sorrow and our household is covered with gloom, what would it be if our children were brought up to this infernal system—one hundred and fifty thousand of them every year brought into the world in these Slave States, amongst these “gentlemen,” amongst this “chivalry,” amongst these men that we can make our friends?’

‘Do you forget the thousandfold griefs and the countless agonies which belonged to the silent conflict of slavery before the war began? It is all very well for the hon. and learned gentleman to tell me, to tell this House—he will not tell the country with any satisfaction to it—that slavery, after all, is not so bad a thing. The brother of my hon. friend the member for South Durham told me that in North Carolina he himself saw a woman whose every child, ten in number, had been sold when they grew up to the age at which they would fetch a price to their master.’

Mr. Bright proceeded to observe that nothing had been heard that night of the Proclamation of the President of the United States. To us there was but one country in what was called the United States, but one President, one general legislature, and one law; there was no President Davis, and, so far as we were concerned, President Lincoln’s Proclamation was a legal and effective document. It was against a Government like that of the North, in such a contest, and with such a foe, that Mr. Roebuck asked the House to throw into the scale the weight of the hostility of England. ‘We know the cause of this revolt,’ said Mr. Bright, finally, ‘its purposes, and its aims. Those who made it have not left us in darkness respecting their intentions, but what they are to accomplish is still hidden from our sight; and I will abstain now, as I have always abstained with regard to it, from predicting what is to come. I know what I hope for, and what I shall rejoice in, but I know nothing of future facts that will enable me to express a confident opinion. Whether it will give freedom to the race which white men have trampled in the dust, and whether the issue will purify a nation steeped in crimes committed against that race, is known only to the Supreme. In His hands are alike the breath of man and the life of States. I am willing to commit to Him the issue of this dreaded contest; but

I implore of Him, and I beseech this House, that my country may lift nor hand nor voice in aid of the most stupendous act of guilt that history has recorded in the annals of mankind.'

One who was present at this debate says that Mr. Bright delivered an oration rather than a set Parliamentary speech. Nothing could be more effective than the calm, measured sarcasms on Mr. Roebuck in the first part of the speech, which dropped from Mr. Bright's lips slowly, and as if they were undergoing a process of distillation into a strength far above proof. Then he grew impassioned, and next he became genuinely pathetic. The whole address was a great manifestation of his fine powers, and was accepted and appreciated from that point of view. It certainly completely discomfited Mr. Roebuck, discredited his arguments, and rendered the adoption of his motion an impossibility. The debate was adjourned to a future day, when Lord Palmerston curtly told Mr. Roebuck that if the 'Emperor of the French and the Queen of England had any communications to make to each other, they had ambassadors, who were the proper organs.' Some time before the discussion of Mr. Roebuck's motion a debate arose on the fitting-out in our ports of ships of war for the service of the Confederate States, in contravention of the Foreign Enlistment Act, and of the policy of neutrality adopted by England. Mr. Bright severely blamed the Government for permitting the escape of the *Alabama*, the fitting-out of which was as notorious as the building of other vessels of war in this country for the service of the Confederates. Our neutrality, he declared, was a cold and unfriendly neutrality, or the Government would prevent the sailing of these vessels, which tended to peril our friendly relations with the United States. The unflinching attitude of the hon. member for Birmingham on the whole of the American question, gave, of course, great offence to Mr. Laird and others who sympathised with the Southern Confederacy.

We pass on from this anxious time to note one more speech of Mr. Bright on America, delivered after the great civil war had been happily concluded by the success of the Northern armies. In St. James's Hall, on the 29th of June, 1867, a public breakfast was given to William Lloyd Garrison, the well-known anti-slavery

advocate. Mr. Bright presided, and passed a glowing eulogium upon the band of anti-slavery labourers in the United States. He sketched Mr. Garrison's arduous and humane career, and the journalistic and other efforts he had laboriously made on behalf of the slave. Then he alluded to Dr. Channing, John Quincy Adams, Wendell Phillips, Charles Sumner, Horace Greeley, Lydia Maria Child, and others, as well as distinguished Southerners who had liberated their slaves, and devoted all they had to the service of freedom. Aptly applying a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews, Mr. Bright remarked that after the writer of the Epistle had described the great men and fathers of the nation, he said : " Time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, of Barak, of Samson, of Jephthae, of David, of Samuel, and the prophets, who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens." I ask if this grand passage of the inspired writer may not be applied to that heroic band who have made America the perpetual home of freedom.'

Alluding next to the war, and to the shadow thrown over a whole continent, but which had now vanished for ever, the speaker observed, 'An ancient and renowned poet has said,

"Unholy is the voice  
Of loud thanksgiving over slaughtered men."

It becomes us not to rejoice, but to be humbled, that a chastisement so terrible should have fallen upon any of our race; but we may be thankful for this—that this chastisement was at least not sent in vain. The great triumph in the field was not all; there came after it another great triumph—a triumph over passion; and there came up before the world the spectacle, not of armies and military commanders, but of the magnanimity and mercy of a powerful and victorious nation. The vanquished were treated as the vanquished, in the history of the world, have never before been treated.' We might now say, if history had no sadder, yet, taking a different view, it had probably also no brighter page. To Mr. Garrison more than to any

other man was this due; for his was the creation of that opinion which had made slavery hateful, and had also made freedom possible in America. His name was now venerated in his own country and in Europe, and in time to come it would be the herald and the synonym of good to millions of men who now dwelt on the almost unknown continent of Africa. Mr. Bright then referred to our own champions of freedom, Clarkson, Wilberforce, Buxton, Sturge, and Thompson; and returning, in conclusion, to the guest of the day, said: 'I have kept within my heart his name, and the names of those who have been associated with him in every step which he has taken; and in public debates in the halls of peace, and even on the blood-soiled fields of war, my heart has always been with those who were the friends of freedom. We welcome him, then, with a cordiality which knows no stint and no limit for him and for his noble associates, both men and women; and we venture to speak a verdict which, I believe, will be sanctioned by all mankind, not only by those who live now, but by those who shall come after, to whom their perseverance and their success shall be a lesson and a help in the future struggles which remain for men to make. One of our oldest and greatest poets has furnished me with a line that well expresses that verdict. Are not William Lloyd Garrison and his fellow-labourers in that world's work—are they not

"On Fame's eternal bead-roll worthy to be filed"?"

These are the utterances of Mr. Bright upon a question which divided Englishmen into passionate and hostile camps. He never swerved in his judgment upon the great issues at stake in the American civil war; and this is no light boast when we look back upon the momentous events of that terrible period, or regard the happy consolidation which has since taken place in that great nation, which speaks the same language as ourselves, and is moved by the same impulses. It was but natural that his unwearied persistence in the cause of the North—a cause which he believed to rest on just and righteous principles—should earn for him the gratitude of the people of the United States. How deep and lasting that gratitude

was, and is, may be gathered, amongst other things, from a statement made by an eminent merchant of New York, who a few years ago came upon a visit to this country. Addressing the children of Gravel Lane Ragged School, Salford, he said, 'If you were to ask in the schools of America, Who are the three men whom, as a country, we love the most? the reply would be: First, Washington, because he was the father of his country; secondly, Abraham Lincoln, because he was the saviour of his country; thirdly, John Bright, because he is the friend of our country.' During the progress of the war, and after the debate on Mr. Roebuck's motion, the members of the New York Chamber of Commerce sent to Mr. Bright, through the American Minister in London, a resolution which had been unanimously passed at one of their meetings, to the effect, 'That this Chamber desires to place on its records an expression of the grateful sense entertained by its members of the intelligent, eloquent, just, and fearless manner in which Mr. John Bright has defended, before the people of England in the British Parliament, the principles of constitutional liberty and international justice, for the maintenance of which the American people are contending, and that the proceedings be communicated to Mr. Bright.' This compliment, which was of no merely formal character, was suitably acknowledged.

But perhaps the most interesting reminiscence relating to Mr. Bright and the United States is one respecting which we are able to give the following particulars. The staff used by President Lincoln was bequeathed to Mr. Bright by the Rev. Dr. J. Smith, of Springfield, Illinois, the latter having first received it from Mr. Lincoln's family. The President's gold-headed staff, or cane, bears the following inscription on the gold head: 'J. A. M'Clernand to the Hon. A. Lincoln, June, 1857;' and on a gold ferrule below are the words, 'Presented to the Rev. Jas. Smith, D.D., late pastor of First Presbyterian Church, Springfield, Ills., by the family of the late President Lincoln, *in memoriam* of the high esteem in which he was held by him and them as their pastor and dear friend, 27th April, 1868.' On another gold ferrule, lower down, is the following: 'Bequeathed by the Rev. Dr. Smith, U.S. Consul, Dundee, to the

Right Hon. John Bright, M.P., in recognition of his tried friendship to the United States.'

The following is an extract from the will of Dr. Smith :—

'I give, devise, and bequeath unto John Bright, Esq., member of the British House of Commons, and to his heirs, the gold-mounted staff, or cane, which belonged to the deceased President Lincoln of the United States, and presented to me by the deceased's widow and family as a mark of the President's respect ; which staff is to be kept as an heirloom in the family of the said John Bright, as a token of the esteem which the late President felt for him because of his unwearied zeal and defence of the United States in suppressing the civil rebellion of the Southern States.'

Mr. Reid, the Executor of Dr. Smith, in a note of the date of July 17, 1871, informing Mr. Bright of the bequest, says, 'I may mention that the late President's family are much pleased at Dr. Smith's bequeathing it to you, as it was the President's wish that you eventually should get it.'

There have been some moral campaigns upon which men have entered with hope and courage, whose results have not, unhappily, during the lifetime of those engaged in them, been witnessed in the furtherance of the cause of truth and freedom. But it was the good fortune of Mr. Bright, and those who laboured in the same cause, during the great American struggle, to witness the attainment of the noble ends for which they strove, viz., the liberation of the slave, and the re-knitting with surer and stronger force those great national bonds which had been momentarily severed.



## CHAPTER XX.

*THE COBDEN-DELANE CONTROVERSY.—THE LAND QUESTION.—  
CAPITAL PUNISHMENT, ETC.*

Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright at Rochdale.—Speeches on the Land and the Labourers.—Misrepresentation by the *Times*.—Correspondence between Mr. Delane and Mr. Cobden.—Mr. Bright defends his Opinions and those of Mr. Cobden at Birmingham.—Severe strictures upon the *Times*.—The Land and the Labourers.—Evils of Primogeniture.—Effects of the Territorial System.—Proposed Reforms.—Inducements to Emigration offered by the United States.—Mr. Bright on the History of the Reformed Parliament.—Great Triumphs achieved.—Reform and Emigration.—Ireland and Foreign Affairs.—Mr. Bright on the Death Punishment and Townley's Case.—Important Speech on Capital Punishment.—Temperance and the Permissive Bill.—Arguments against Arbitrary Legislation.



WHEN Mr. Cobden met his constituents at Rochdale on the 24th of February, 1863, he was accompanied by Mr. Bright, and their speeches on that occasion—which were chiefly on the subject of the English laws affecting land and labourers—led to a controversy well known as ‘the Cobden-Delane dispute.’ In the course of his speech, Mr. Cobden said, ‘With regard to some things in foreign countries, we don’t compare favourably. You have no peasantry but that of England which is entirely divorced from the land. I don’t want any agrarian outrages by which we should change all this; but this I find—and it is quite consistent with human nature—that wherever I go the condition of the people is generally pretty good, in comparison with the power they have to take care of themselves; and if you have a class entirely divorced from political power, while in another country they possess it, they will be treated there with more consideration, they will have greater advantages, they will be better educated, and have a better chance of holding

property, than in a country where they are deprived of the advantage of political power.'

What Mr. Bright said at the meeting on the subject of the land was this: 'I should say, if we were fairly represented, that feudalism, with regard to the land of England, would perish, and that the agricultural labourer throughout the United Kingdom would be redeemed from that poverty and serfdom which, up to this time, have been his lot. It would take a night, it would take a long speech, to go into the question of the condition of that unfortunate class; but with laws such as we have, which are intended to bring vast tracts of land into the possession of one man—that one man may exercise great political power—that system is a curse to the country, and dooms the agricultural labourer, I say, to perpetual poverty and degradation.'

There was nothing of a revolutionary character in this language; it was a fair and legitimate expression of opinion, however others might differ from the view put forward. But the *Times*, in commenting upon the above passages, and upon others delivered in the course of the evening, said that the language was 'calculated to excite discontent among the poor and half-informed, and had really only one intelligible meaning—"Reduce the electoral franchise; for when you have done so you will obtain an assembly which will seize on the estates of the proprietors of land, and divide them gratuitously among the poor."' Mr. Cobden naturally protested against this gross misrepresentation of his views, and addressed himself direct to Mr. J. T. Delane, the editor of the *Times*, who personally assumed the responsibility of the interpretation put upon the speeches. Mr. Cobden thereupon described this interpretation as a libellous outrage upon two members of the House of Commons, and an insult to millions of honest, industrious Englishmen. 'Nobody,' he said, 'knows better than yourself, except the writer who actually penned the scandalous passage in question, that this accusation against Mr. Bright, of wishing to divide the land of the rich amongst the poor, is nothing but the resort to a stale historical trick—(this only aggravates the character of the libel)—to draw away public attention from the real issue, and thus escape from the discussion of

a serious but for the moment an inconvenient public topic. In order to trail a red-herring across the true scent, a cry of spoliation was raised.' Mr. Delane defended himself by saying he had never insinuated that Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright proposed to accomplish the division of land by violent means, but they had suggested that the end could be achieved by legislative measures—by giving political power to the peasantry.

The matter was not allowed to rest with this unsatisfactory and inadequate conclusion to the correspondence. On the 26th of January, 1864, Mr. Bright addressed a meeting of his constituents in the Town Hall, Birmingham, and his speech on that occasion was mainly devoted to the question of the distribution of land, and to a defence of the views held by Mr. Cobden and himself.

He began, however, with a reference to one or two other matters. At that time the Danish and German dispute kept Europe in a state of suspense which it was feared might end in war. Mr. Bright, happily anticipating our policy in that matter, said that any Government which would plunge this country into war under the pretence of maintaining the balance of power in Europe, and sustaining any kingdom there, little or great, was not worthy of the confidence of the people of England, but deserved their execration and abhorrence. As to a second important question, that of the recognition of the Southern Confederacy, Mr. Bright said that such recognition, if it could take place, would only exasperate still more the terrible strife existing on the North American continent, and would spread that strife even to Europe itself. He believed that in the providence of the Supreme, the slaveholder had been permitted to commit the act of suicide; and he must be worse than deaf and blind who could not see that slavery—the most odious and the most indescribable offence against man and against Heaven—was coming to a certain and rapid end.

Mr. Bright then came to the question of the Rochdale speeches. He first read the extracts and the comments from the *Times* we have given above, and then referred to the editor's defence. Next, defending Mr. Cobden and himself from the strictures of Mr. Delane, he said :—

'This is the gentleman who professes to counsel and lead the nation. Now, suppose he had charged Adam Smith, the great apostle of political economy, with approving piracy, or if he had charged John Wesley with being an encourager of drunkenness and profanity, would it have been more extraordinary than that he should charge Mr. Cobden and myself with instigating agrarian outrages and the seizure of the estates of those who now hold them, for the purpose of dividing them among the people, of course taking nothing from the people for them, and therefore giving nothing to the rich for them? If there be two men in England, I will undertake to say, who have more conscientiously and more faithfully than others preached for twenty-five years the doctrines of absolute honesty with regard to political questions in England, those two men are Mr. Cobden and myself. But Mr. Cobden came forward to assail Mr. Delane when he made this charge against me. He found a man in a mask endeavouring to stab me in the back,—for he had not seen that the same man had been, in a previous article, also stabbing him,—and he came forward and dragged his mask from him, and he showed him to the gaze of the whole nation and of the world. And at last, after denial and equivocation of every kind, this unmasked editor of this great journal was obliged to retire from the personal part of this controversy, and to skulk back into his anonymous hiding-place, which suits him better.'

Mr. Cobden lamented, continued Mr. Bright, as he did, the anonymous system of writing, which was inevitably a shelter for a man who had no sense of honour. There was a description of a notorious American politician which suited Mr. Delane admirably. It was said of this politician that he was a just man and a righteous man, and that he walked uprightly *before the world*, but when he was not before the world his walk was 'slantindicular.' But notwithstanding all this, the *Times* was a power in this country, and also in Europe. No one lamented more than he did that a paper once great in its independence had become—what should he say?—domesticated, for the editor of the *Times* was now domesticated in the houses of Cabinet Ministers and members of high families in London. He had learned now, when his paper might have been more useful than ever, to fetch and carry for Cambridge House.

Leaving the personal part of the question, Mr. Bright proceeded to expound his ideas upon the general subject. There were three great classes, he said, connected with land—the landowners, the tenant farmers, and the labourers. In regard to prosperity, the last-named class were at a comparatively greater distance from the landlord, and from the tenant, probably, than they were at any former

period. He referred to the letters in the *Times* published under the well-known initials 'S. G. O.,' and also to certain letters in the *Star* newspaper describing the condition of the population in Buckinghamshire; but lest his audience should be unwilling to take their evidence, he cited that of the *Saturday Review*. In an article on 'Agricultural Labourers,' a writer in that journal said that when foreigners come to England and read of the condition of agricultural labourers they must be much shocked, for, he added, 'we are moved to a languid shame and sadness by thinking how true the picture is, and what *wretched, uncared-for, untaught brutes* the people are who raise the crops on which we live.' And then he went on to declare of the old feudalism, which was precisely the thing he (Mr. Bright) had mentioned, 'The old feudalism of England—the state of things when there yet were serfs, and when the lords of the soil were almost a different order of beings—still colours the relations of the rich and the poor.' After other passages showing the degraded condition of the labourer, the writer proposed as a remedy that instead of a man receiving parochial relief from the parish, he should be allowed to receive it from that larger area, the Union; and that a law which was now hardly ever put in practice should be repealed, by which a working man breaking a contract to work was treated as a felon.

Mr. Bright did not believe these remedies would be sufficient for the terrible malady described, and he asked whether it was the unchangeable law of Heaven that the agricultural population of the country should continue in their present condition. He could prove, beyond all doubt, that in all those countries in Europe where the land was divided and the people had a chance of having some of it—those, in fact, who were industrious and frugal—that the condition of the agricultural and peasant population was infinitely superior to anything that was to be seen in Great Britain and Ireland. In many countries in Europe, and in the United States, the law respecting the descent of property followed what was believed to be the natural law of affection and justice between parent and children. All the property was fairly divided. What was the case in England? Personal property was divided equally, but land was given

to the eldest son in one lump. 'Now, tell me whether the principle which the law of Europe for the most part wishes to enforce, that which the law of America enforces when there is no will, that which we enforce when land is not in question—whether that is not a more just law, does not approve itself more to the hearts of men, and before the eye of Heaven, than a law by which we send beggars into the world—it may be half a dozen children—that we may make one rich in the possession of unnecessary abundance?' It would be as reasonable to cut off all the younger boys and girls from all education and all freedom as it was to cut them off from their share of their father's property.

Mr. Jefferson, who filled the office of President of the United States, considered it, said Mr. Bright, to be one of the greatest acts of his life when he prevailed upon the Legislature of Virginia to abolish the laws of primogeniture and entail; and in his *Life* was to be found this statement: 'The class which thus provided for the perpetuation of its wealth also monopolised the civil honours of the colony.' The effect of the distribution was to lessen the chances of a man being so enormously rich, and to give an opportunity to a larger number to become moderately so. If there were fewer coaches and six in the State of Virginia, there were twenty times as many carriages and pairs. After touching upon the question of entails, Mr. Bright continued: 'Now, may I ask you what is the political reason for which this state of things is maintained? It is for the very reason for which this system was established eight hundred years ago—that there may be in this country a handful of persons, three or four times as many as there are here—twice as many perhaps—who are the owners of nearly all the land, in whose hands is concentrated nearly all the power, by whom the government of the country is mainly conducted, and amongst whom the patronage of the government is mainly distributed. In every country in the world, as far as I know, the possessors of land are the possessors of power.'

This point the speaker proceeded to illustrate. Our great territorial system—which was formed of a number of great properties—left the cultivator of the soil ignorant, and hopeless, and dependent,

and degraded. Now, lest the Man in the Mask should misrepresent him again, he would say that he was not against great estates, or great farms, or great factories, but he had a very great liking for small estates, small farms, and small factories. Mr. Bright then indicated as follows the nature of the reforms which he desired :—

‘What I propose is this—it is nothing that I have not stated before—it is the most moderate thing that can be proposed. If you want to see an admirable description of what I think it would be wise to do, you will find it in a paper which certainly is not very Radical—is rather, in my opinion, though conducted with considerable ability, conceited in some of its criticisms upon us—I mean the *Spectator*. There was an article on Saturday last in this paper on the subject of land laws in New York, and although there are only three or four lines about New York in the article, that does not matter, for it is admirably written. In one place it reads as follows : “No doubt Mr. Bright would consider this not sufficient change for the purposes he wishes.” He is quite mistaken. The changes which he proposes are more extensive than any changes I have ever proposed, either in public or in private. What are these changes? First of all, that the law shall declare that when any person owning property dies without making a distribution of it by will, the law shall distribute it upon the same principle that it now adopts when it divides—I am now speaking of landed property—any other kind of property. For example : suppose a man has got money in the bank—I wish everybody had,—suppose he has machinery in his mill, merchandise in his warehouse, ships upon the ocean, or that he has shares, or the parchments for them in his safe,—if he dies, the Government by the law, or rather the law itself, makes a distribution of all that property amongst all his children, in accordance with the great universal law of natural parental affection and justice. Then, I say, let that principle be extended to all the property which a man may die possessed of; and, so far as that goes, I want no further change.

‘Then, with regard to the question of entails, I would say this : the *Spectator* proposes that a man, by entailing his property—so far as I can understand—shall only prevent himself and his next heir from disposing of it; that there shall be, in point of fact, only two persons in the entail. Now, what I propose is that a man may leave his property to as many persons as he likes, to A, B, C, D, and E and F, and so on all through the alphabet, if they are all alive at the time he makes his will, and he can put all their names into it. But at present he can leave it to these people, and to a child then unborn, and who shall not be born, it may be, till twenty years after he has made his will. I would cut that off. I contend that it should be left to persons who are in existence, and whose names are in the will, and you will find that as A, B, and C died it would finally come into the hands of a man who would have the absolute disposal of it, and who could keep, or sell, or give, or waste it as he pleased.

‘And I believe it will be much better for the public when that freedom of transfer is given to the possessors of land which is given to the possessors of every other kind of property. Everything which I am proposing is carried out, I believe, through most of the States in the American Union, and to a greater extent on the Continent of Europe, and is being adopted in the Australian colonies.’

The speaker then asked his audience, as reasonable men, as men of business, whether this was spoliation—whether this was agrarian outrage—whether this was stimulating the working man and the agricultural labourer to incendiarism or to something worse? Nothing of the kind. It was but laying before them those just principles of law and practice which were admitted to be just in every other country in the world than this, and which we admitted to be just with regard to everything else, except the single article of land. He and Mr. Cobden were charged with all sorts of dreadful things by the Man in the Mask, but it was really he who frightened the landowners. As a class, the landed gentry—amongst whom, however, were some brilliant exceptions—were not a wise class. On the principles of law and of government, judging them by the past, they were dark as night itself. The landed proprietors could never find out, till Mr. Cobden and a few others told them, that the Corn Law was a great injury to them. They did not know that it actually lowered the value of their land, and diminished the security of their rents, and that it loaded them with an inconceivable amount of public odium; whilst, at the same time, it beggared hundreds and thousands of the people, and menaced this nation with rebellion. Yet for the course he and Mr. Cobden took twenty years ago they were slandered by the gentleman in the mask as they were now. The *Times* said everything that was spiteful and untrue then, as it did at that moment. And yet who could tell how much it was owing to the abolition of the Corn Laws that the Queen was now wielding an unchallenged sceptre over a tranquil realm?

Mr. Bright next alluded to the great system of emigration going on from England and Ireland to the United States, and said he could tell the landowners an important fact they would do well to consider. In America there were 140,000,000 acres of land, surveyed, mapped out, set apart for those who were ready to settle upon them. Under the operation of the Homestead Act, any man of twenty-one years of age might come into these territories, might choose what was called a section, which was 160 acres of land, being one-fourth of a square mile, and on payment of a fee of ten dollars, equal to two pounds English, he might apply to have this



land conveyed to him for no other payment for a term of five years. At the end of five years, if he had done what the Government required, the law gave him a patent, but what we should call a Parliamentary title, and the land became his own absolute freehold for ever. If English labourers knew all the facts, the temptation to emigrate would be irresistible to hundreds of thousands who had now no thought of moving to another country. The United States offered social equality and political equality; and they also offered the very highest education to all, for the mere payment of the school-rate prevailing through the various States of the Union. Mr. Bright closed with this eloquent peroration, in which he referred to the nature of his own efforts for the amelioration of the people :—

‘I ask you if I am wrong in saying to the rich and the great, that I believe, if they knew their own interests, that it would be worth their while to try to make this country a more desirable country for the labourer to live in. If they disregard this great question, we, who are of the middle, and not absolutely powerless class, shall have to decide between the claims of territorial magnates and the just rights of millions of our countrymen. Some men I meet with—and now and then I wonder where they were born, and why they came into the world—regard these territorial magnates as idols before whom we are all to bow down in humble submission. Travellers tell us there is a tribe in Africa so entirely given up to superstition that they fill their huts and hovels with so many idols that they do not even leave room for their families. It may be so in this country. We build up a system which is injurious to our political freedom, and is destructive of the intelligence, and the comfort, and the morality, and the best interests of our producing and working classes. (Cheers.) Now, am I the enemy of any class, when I come forward to state facts like these, and to explain principles such as these? Shall we go on groping continually in the dark, and make no effort to strengthen our position?

‘Do not suppose because I stand here oftener to find fault with the laws of my country than to praise them, that I am less English or less patriotic, or that I have less sympathy for my country or my countrymen than other men have. (Cheers.) I want our country to be populous, to be powerful, and to be happy. But this can only be done—it never has been done in any country—but by just laws justly administered. I plead only for what I believe to be just. I wish to do wrong to no man. For twenty-five years I have stood before audiences—great meetings of my countrymen—pleading only for justice. (Applause.) During that time, as you know, I have endured measureless insult, and have passed through hurricanes of abuse. I need not tell you that my clients have not been generally the rich and the great, but rather the poor and the lowly. They cannot give me place and dignities and wealth; but honourable service in their cause yields me that which is of far higher and more lasting value—the consciousness that I have laboured to expound and uphold laws which,

though they were not given amid the thunders of Sinai, are not less the commandments of God, and not less intended to promote and secure the happiness of men.' (Great cheering.)

Three days after the delivery of this speech, Mr. Bright was entertained at a *soirée* given by a number of his constituents in the Assembly Room of Nock's Hotel. On the motion of Mr. William Morgan, a resolution was carried recognising 'the patriotic labours of the members for the borough.' Mr. Scholefield, the senior member for Birmingham, was unable to be present, but in responding to the motion Mr. Bright gave a long and interesting address upon the history and action of the Reformed Parliament. Ladies were present at the gathering, and in commencing his speech the hon. gentleman said it had not only been common, as Mr. R. W. Dale had said, to create the impression that what are called serious people should not meddle with politics, but that these public questions were entirely out of the field in which women should exercise themselves. He confidently differed from any such opinion, for what was done under the form of political action could by no means be indifferent to the mothers, and wives, and sisters, and daughters of England.

Mr. Bright then went on to say that he had no fondness for political meetings and platform work; and that it was the existence of grievances which for twenty years had called him from the quiet of his own home, and from the pursuit of business. Still, there was a bright side to the aspect of England, in the changes which had taken place of recent years. The first great measure which suggested itself to him was the Catholic Emancipation Act of 1829, which gave the right of Parliamentary representation to the whole nation of Ireland. The next great step in making this a perfectly free country was the Reform Act, in connection with which measure Birmingham took so distinguished a part. The speaker then alluded to a still more celebrated measure, that for the abolition of slavery, which affected not England alone, but the opinion of the world. It did more than emancipate 800,000 slaves in the colonies of England; it set an example which the world could not but follow. 'You may rely upon it that from this great act is to be dated to a large extent the creation of that conscientious feeling in England which

has been growing from that day to this; while it is owing to the unteachable spirit of the slaveholders of another country that a great nation has been brought into the throes of a fearful revolution, out of which I trust not only will that nation itself be purified, but that four millions of slaves will be free.' Then came this tribute to a distinguished Birmingham citizen, Mr. Sturge: 'And whilst this passes through my mind, I cannot help for a moment touching upon the fact that one of your citizens, now no more, my personal and intimate friend, was one of the most eminent of those who endeavoured to stir the conscience of the English people to that great act of justice; and I never pass, as I do often pass when I come here, that memorable figure of him which you have erected in one of the most conspicuous places in your town, without hoping that every citizen of Birmingham, when he comes to consider public questions, whether regarding this country or that other country to which reference has already been made, and where that great struggle is being carried on, will endeavour to be animated by the disinterested, the noble, and the Christian spirit by which your late eminent townsman was distinguished.'

Mr. Bright then referred to the Poor Law Amendment Act passed by the Whigs, which did credit to their administration. Then came a very quiet and unsatisfactory time. The Whigs had settled comfortably into their places. They had a motto, he believed, which they had not publicly announced. It was this, 'A place for every man, and every man in his place.' They were thrown out of office in 1841, and Parliament assembled after the general election with a majority of ninety pledged to oppose the abolition of the Corn Law. Sir Robert Peel and his great party looked down with contempt upon all who were moving in that question; but the result showed how much was to be done by continuous and disinterested labour on behalf of a great cause, and by appealing to the sympathies of the whole nation. The great work was not achieved by a number of benevolent ladies and gentlemen forming societies all over the country, and giving people alms, but it was by repealing the Corn Law—by a simple act of justice, an act that was so just that he had never, or scarcely ever, heard a man deny its justice,

except on something which they called political considerations, which meant that there were political reasons why that great act of justice should not be done. But the question of corn was not all—there was that of sugar. In 1840 the single article of sugar in this country cost—by reason of the monopoly—not less than six millions sterling more than it would have cost if it could have been bought freely in the market of the world. The fall of the corn monopoly, which was the keystone of the arch, let everything supported by it down. The sugar, timber, and other monopolies fell, amongst them being that important monopoly which our ship-owners had, whose abolition had been so advantageous to the whole country. Once there was a tariff with 1200 articles paying duty ; now there were, perhaps, only twelve or fifteen articles upon which duties were levied.

The French Treaty was next referred to. Englishmen had been taught to regard the French as their natural enemies, but the Emperor showed that he was willing to have more intimate relations with this country. The treaty was eventually effected—effected solely, on the part of England, by Mr. Cobden ; and he (Mr. Bright) believed that it was the most important document of the kind that had ever been signed by the rulers of any two nations in Europe. The last of the reforms touched upon was that for securing the freedom of the press, in which no persons in Parliament were more actively concerned than Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Cobden, and the speaker. Referring to the *Birmingham Post* in order to illustrate the operation of the paper duty, Mr. Bright said, ‘ You pay a penny for your admirable newspaper in this town, and when doing so you are not conscious, perhaps, of what happened only a very short time ago. The paper on which it was printed, say ten years ago, had a stamp of a penny upon it : the paper itself did not cost probably more than a halfpenny, and therefore there was over a hundred or perhaps two hundred per cent. of taxation upon the paper before our friend Mr. Jaffray could touch it. Well, then—I am not speaking now of the stamp—there was also a tax of, at one time, threepence, and at another time three-halfpence, per pound upon paper itself at the paper mill.’ The impost was removed, the penny press would

bear comparison with their dearer neighbours, and there was but one opinion as to the inestimable benefit which the freedom of the press had conferred upon the country. Every single thing he had mentioned was now by general consent admitted to have been a just and beneficial change. 'You can hardly find a Tory now. It is a blessed thing, but somehow or other either the Tories die off, or they change themselves, or they do certainly take a little different colour. You can hardly find any of them now but will admit that a great number of these changes—some will admit that all of them—have been wise changes, and beneficial to the country. And yet it is very odd that the very same men at this moment set up to be authorities in politics.' After being wrong in everything for twenty-five years back, they yet called upon the constituencies to believe that they were the men, and that wisdom would die with them.

Having touched upon the question of Reform, observing that the Act of 1832 was insufficient, and that there must be another substantial measure before long, Mr. Bright dealt with the question of emigration. The largest portion of the emigrants went from Ireland; and, as he had said before, it was a curious fact that whenever an Irishman planted his foot in any foreign land, he became an irreconcilable enemy of England. 'But if the government of England in Ireland had been a just government—if it had been just even since the time of the Union, sixty years ago—all that hostile feeling might have been cleared away long since, and Irishmen would have been as loyal and contented as any class of Englishmen. And if they had found it necessary from any cause to transport themselves to the United States, you would have found in the United States the feeling that they had not been driven by injustice from their native land, but that, turning back to that land with the loving, longing gaze of patriots, they might have said,

"Breathes there a man with soul so dead,  
Who never to himself hath said,  
This is my own, my native land?"

But now—now, under the feelings created by a long course of misgovernment, continued from father to son, directed against their

social, their political, and their religious feeling, there is hardly an Irishman in the United States who is not the victim of any man who chooses to make political capital by exciting hostility against England. There can be no just government of Ireland until you abolish the Irish Protestant Church.'

The hon. gentleman next discussed the situation of foreign affairs, and the doctrine of non-intervention. The people of England must before long make up their minds whether they would accept the doctrine of non-intervention in its entirety and completeness, or whether they would allow it when it was convenient, and repudiate it when their passions had been a little stirred. Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell—the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary—had been saturated with the theories and doctrines upon the question of non-intervention and foreign affairs which prevailed near the beginning of the century, and it was in consequence of these feelings that they could not keep themselves out of the Crimean War. Yet notwithstanding our foreign policy, and the conflict which had occurred, the affairs of Europe were not settled on a permanent basis, and Europe had doubled the armed men and doubled the military expenditure which it had before the Crimean War. Then there was the question between Denmark and Germany. It was not yet settled, though perhaps it might be settled. Such questions could only be permanently settled by those who were deeply interested in them. 'We are not deeply interested in this question—I do not mean interested in the sense of the Prince of Wales marrying a daughter of the King of Denmark. I think nothing would be more unfortunate than that, whilst the members of the royal family are not allowed to marry from English citizens, they should, in marrying abroad, therefore embroil Englishmen in the quarrels of foreign countries. I can imagine nothing more likely to make Englishmen doubt whether royal alliances can have any pleasant interest to them if such a course is taken.'

Alluding to the popular ignorance on the question of the deliberations of the Cabinet, Mr. Bright observed that there was an inner Cabinet, and it was generally compounded of the Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, and occasionally one other

Minister. He furnished some illustrations from recent political history on this matter, and added that a great deal of the most delicate business of foreign affairs was at that time conducted almost entirely by Lord Palmerston and Lord Russell. Steps might be taken, of which other members of the Cabinet might be ignorant, that would plunge the country in war. If there were such members, he begged them to insist upon knowing everything that was done; and he exhorted people everywhere to see that the power of England should not be exerted, the blood of England should not be spilt, the wealth created by the toils of Englishmen should not be squandered, except in some great cause in which the solid and permanent interests of the country were engaged.

In concluding his address, amid enthusiastic applause, Mr. Bright said: 'We have within us the elements of a nation far greater in the future than anything that has been in the past, even in the most renowned and glorious days. We can set ourselves free from the prejudices and from the darkness of the past. We can give to our people education, we can open up to them new sources of industry, we can reduce the expenditure of our government, we can invite another million or two of our people within the pale of the constitution, and taking them, we can ask counsel of them that we may assist each other in the wise government of this great nation. All this we can do, and all that is wanted is that in working out our political problems we should take for our foundation that which recommends itself to our conscience as just and moral. I have not the slightest regard for that statesmanship which is divorced from the morality that we say ought to guide us in our private life, which we gather for a nation as for individuals from the religion which we profess. Time, persistent labour, fidelity to the great principles which we hold and believe in, will certainly give us the victory over existing evils, as similar qualities and similar conduct have given the victories which I have described to you.'

In the House of Commons, in the session of 1864, Mr. Bright spoke upon several interesting topics, in addition to the foreign questions already named. He put in a strong plea for Mr. Herbert, the distinguished Royal Academician, when the subject of his fresco

and the remuneration he was to receive for it was discussed in Supply. Mr. Bright described the painting as one that would reflect lustre upon any artist in any country, and in this view he was supported by Mr. Gregory and other members.

When the case of the young convict Townley was discussed, Mr. Bright showed the terrible uncertainty which prevailed with regard to the death punishment. Townley had been sentenced to death for the murder of a young lady named Goodwin, who had been engaged to him, but had broken off the match. The Home Secretary reprieved Townley, in consequence of a report made under the Lunacy Act, though, as the result of another examination made, he was declared perfectly sane. Townley was afterwards removed to Bethlehem Hospital, and from thence to Pentonville Prison, his sentence having been commuted into one of penal servitude for life. In consequence of the facts attending this case, and the contradictory reports which had been made, Sir George Grey brought in a bill for amending the Insane Prisoners Act, which would obviate all such difficulties as had arisen in Townley's case. In the discussion on this bill, Mr. Bright said that whether they hanged Townley, or Wright, or any one else, the punishment of death was at war with the best and noblest sentiments of the noblest portion of the people. That warfare which they allowed to remain year after year would continue to be a warfare with the best sense of the Home Department and the best sense of the population.

At a later date, namely, on the 3rd of May, Mr. Bright entered more fully into this question of capital punishment, which, as we have seen, attracted his attention at the very commencement of his career. Mr. Ewart, on the day specified, brought forward a motion for the abolition of the punishment of death. He spoke eloquently in its favour, and was as ably supported by his seconder, Mr. Denman. Lord Henry Lennox moved as an amendment 'that a select committee be appointed to inquire into the operation of the laws relating to capital punishment.' Sir George Grey said he believed it would neither be safe nor expedient to abolish capital punishment in all cases. Speaking on behalf of the Government, he was unwilling to let this important question be decided by an



accidental majority in a committee. He suggested that both motion and amendment should be withdrawn, and then the Government would recommend Her Majesty to issue a commission of inquiry into the subject.

Mr. Bright followed, and in reference to the opinions of the Judges, quoted by Sir G. Grey, he cited the observations of an eminent Irish Judge, made in a conversation with himself. He said, 'Beware of the Judges. If Parliament had acted on the opinion of the Judges, we should have been hanging now for forgery, for horse-stealing, and for I know not how many other offences for which capital punishment has long been abolished.' As to the question whether the best form of investigating this subject was not by a committee of the House, he (Mr. Bright) would undertake to say that if he were to enquire in every civilised country in the world where there was a representative legislative assembly, he would find that the changes which had been made in their laws had been made invariably in consequence of inquiries instituted by those chambers, and carried on by means of committees formed amongst their members. He admitted that the bulk of the committees of the House were not fairly constituted, but as regarded obtaining evidence, a committee would be equal to any tribunal that could be established.

With respect to the main question, the House had been rather led away from it. This crime of murder was a net which included cases as different in their quality as in their guilt, and in their consequences to society, as the difference between the lowest class of murder which the law now included and the pettiest larceny which was punishable before a single magistrate. Yet all these were part of the same list of crimes, and men condemned for them would be executed, unless the Home Secretary was strongly importuned to interfere. Mr. Bright then said :

'There can be no doubt whatever that if capital punishment be retained, and if it be absolutely necessary that there should be a crime called murder to which capital punishment attaches, it is no less necessary that there should be, as there are in some other countries, three or four degrees of manslaughter, and that for the highest degree of manslaughter there should be the highest kind of secondary punishment, and that

the power should be placed in the hands of the jury of determining what should be the particular class in which the criminal should be placed. There is no doubt that this is necessary to be done. I think Voltaire—who said a good many things that were worth remembering—remarked that the English were the only people who murdered by law. And Mirabeau, when in this country, hearing of a number of persons who had been hanged on a certain morning, said, “The English nation is the most merciless of any that I have heard or read of.” And at this very moment, when we have struck off within the last fifty years at least a hundred offences which were then capital, we remain still in this matter the most merciless of Christian countries.’

The hon. member referred to the cases of Townley, Wright, and Hall, and affirmed that there was not a country in Europe, nor a free State in America, in which either of those criminals would have been punished with death. Yet Sir George Grey continued to repeat the same arguments for continuing a law which drove him to distraction almost every time he had to administer it. ‘I am surprised that the right hon. gentleman, who has had to face the suffering which has been brought on him by this law, has never had the courage to come to this House and ask it fairly to consider, in the light of the evidence which all other Governments and the laws of all other countries afford, whether the time has not come when this fearful punishment may be abolished. The right hon. gentleman says the punishment is so terrible that it will deter offenders from the commission of crime. Of course it is terrible to one just standing upon the verge of the grave; but months before, when the crime is committed, when the passion is upon the criminal, the punishment is of no avail whatsoever. I do not think it is possible to say too much against the argument that because this is a dreadful punishment, it is very efficient to deter a criminal from the commission of crime.’

Having cited the humane position on this question occupied by Russia, Tuscany, Belgium, &c., Mr. Bright asked whether there was any man with a particle of sense or the power of reason who believed that human life in this country was made more secure because ten or twelve men were publicly put to death every year. The security for human life depended upon the reverence for human life; and unless we could inculcate in the minds of the people a veneration for that which God only had given, we did little by the

most severe and barbarous penalties to preserve the safety of our citizens. Mr. Bright then read some interesting extracts from letters written by the Governors of the three states of Rhode Island, Michigan, and Wisconsin, where the death penalty had been abolished, showing the salutary results of the abolition.

The special cases which had been cited that night with regard to executions were not, he continued, by any means the most fearful that had occurred. There was a case at Chester which must rejoice the fiends below, if fiends there be, to discover that, after the law of gentleness and love had been preached on earth for eighteen hundred years, such a scene as that could be enacted in our day in one of the most civilised and renowned cities of the country. And these were cases which would happen again if this law remained: and all the difficulties which the right hon. gentleman had alluded to that night and on previous occasions were difficulties inseparable from the continuance of the punishment. Parliament had unfortunately been very heedless upon this question; and Secretaries of State had gone on with their painful duties, never having the courage to ask Parliament to consider whether the system might not be entirely abolished. It was in opposition to the sentiment of the most moral and religious population of the country. Whenever the announcement of an impending execution was made, there was a feeling of doubt in almost every house in England as to whether the law was right, and a feeling of disgust and horror amongst hundreds of thousands of the best portion of the people.

None of us wished to go back to the state of barbarism of a century ago when so many men were hanged, not one of whom had been convicted of the crime of murder; but just the same class of arguments were used then in support of such barbarism as were used at the present time. He wondered that the Home Secretary had not been driven to propose to the House that this evil should be put an end to. Was the Englishman worse than any other man? Was the nation worse than other nations, that the same lenient laws could not be practised? For himself, he said he could wash vengeance and blood from our code without difficulty and without danger.

As to the composition of the proposed Commission, Mr. Bright said he hoped it would not be formed of Judges, for in all past times a majority of them had been opposed to the amelioration of the Criminal Code. With a Commission so constituted as to command the confidence of all, he believed that a great improvement of the law would be effected, though all might not be achieved that Mr. Ewart desired. But in time they might arrive unanimously at the opinion, that the security of public or private life in England did not depend upon the public strangling of three or four poor wretches every year. 'This Parliament is about to expire, I suppose, before very long—though some say it is to endure during another session; I should be glad indeed if it might be said of this Parliament at some future time, that it had dared to act upon the true lessons, and not upon the superstitions of the past; and that it might be declared to be the Parliament which destroyed the scaffold and the gallows, in order that it might teach the people that human life is sacred, and that on that principle alone can human life be secured.'

At the close of the debate, the amendment and motion were withdrawn, and this substantive resolution, moved by Mr. Neate, was agreed to: 'That an humble address be presented to Her Majesty, praying that she will be graciously pleased to issue a Royal Commission to inquire into the provisions and operation of the laws under which the punishment of death is now inflicted in the United Kingdom, and the manner in which it is inflicted; and to report whether it is desirable to make any alteration therein.'

One other question, that relating to temperance and the Permissive Bill, remains to be dealt with here. Mr. Bright is well known to be an abstemious man, and in a speech made at the annual meeting of the Society of Friends a few years ago, he stated that he would not say he had abstained for so long a period as thirty-five years, but for thirty-four years—from the time he became a householder—he had not introduced into his house any wine or spirituous liquors whatsoever. He had in his house no decanters, and he thought he had no wine-glasses, and had not had them since 1839, when he took to housekeeping. It had, perhaps, cost him

some slight inconvenience, but altogether he had had no occasion to regret the step he then took.

Holding such views, and after so long a practice of personal abstinence, interest naturally attaches to the arguments which led Mr. Bright to oppose the Permissive Bill as he did in 1864. Mr. (now Sir Wilfred) Lawson brought forward the bill in question, whereby it was proposed to make the issue of licences for the sale of intoxicating liquors subject to the veto of a given proportion of the ratepayers in a district. A good deal of interest was excited in the country over this proposition, and when the second reading came on in the House of Commons, on the 8th of June, a lengthy debate ensued. Captain Jervis moved the rejection of the bill.

Mr. Bright said that the question had now taken great hold upon the public mind, and it could not be spoken of as a scheme of wild enthusiasts. In dealing with the subject, we should look to the improved condition of the people or to special legislation: he preferred trusting to the former influence. He was old enough to remember when drunkenness amongst the upper classes was ten or twenty times more common than it was at present. Temperance had made great way amongst those classes who could obtain liquor at their will; and if it were possible to make all classes in the country as temperate as those of whom he had spoken, we should be amongst the very soberest nations of the earth. But something might still be done by special legislation, for the condition of things was not satisfactory; and as regarded licences, in some cases the number of public-houses and beer-houses had been unnecessarily and mischievously increased. But the present proposal, that a majority of ratepayers should decide whether licences should be granted or renewed in their districts, was a novel experiment, and one which had never been proposed or sanctioned by the House with regard to any other description of property, or any other interest. However desirous the mover might be to carry out his object, he (Mr. Bright) did not think it likely that the House of Commons would consent to such a proposition as that.

He would object altogether to allow such a matter as this to be decided by the vote of two-thirds of the ratepayers of any parish or

town. 'I think there would be, in all probability, sudden, capricious, and unjust action under this bill, which would have a very unfortunate effect upon the interests of those immediately concerned; and I think it might also create throughout the country violent discussions on the question, and I am afraid might even produce a great and pernicious reaction against the very honest and good objects which my hon. friend desires to carry out. For that reason, as a member of this House representing a very large constituency, and having my sympathies entirely with those who are endeavouring to promote temperance amongst the people, and after much consideration on this subject, I have never yet seen my way at all to give a vote which would tend to pass a measure such as that now proposed to the House.' Those friends of temperance made a great mistake who argued that the sale of these articles was in itself absolutely evil and immoral. 'There is abundant ground on which to argue this question on which no man can assail or controvert them, and it is unfortunate for a great and good cause that any of its enthusiastic but illogical advocates should select arguments which cannot fairly be sustained.'

But if this bill were disposed of, was there nothing else which the House could do to meet the growing opinion of the country on the question? He thought that the municipal councils of boroughs might be entrusted with the decision of how many licences should be granted in their districts, thus avoiding that capriciousness of action which would exist if the matter were left to the decision of a majority of ratepayers. In conclusion, Mr. Bright remarked: 'I have not that faith in any act of the Legislature on this subject which my hon. friend has. I believe in the effects of the instruction of the people, and of the improvement which is gradually taking place amongst them. I think that drunkenness is not on the increase, but rather is declining; and I hope, whether the law be altered or not, we shall find our working classes becoming more and more sober than in past times. But as I have on many occasions been before the public favouring the efforts of the advocates of temperance, I have felt bound to state the reasons why I cannot give my vote in favour of this bill, and to suggest what the House might do by way

of giving to the people through their municipal councils control over this question. By doing this you might promote temperance among the people, and at the same time avoid a great and manifest injustice to thousands of persons now engaged in this trade, whose property would be rendered uncertain, if not altogether destroyed, if the bill of the hon. gentleman should receive the sanction of the House.'

The bill was also strongly opposed by Mr. Roebuck, who described it as the most mischievous measure he had ever heard proposed. Sir George Grey objected to the proposal on grounds somewhat similar to those advanced by Mr. Bright; and after further discussion the second reading of the bill was negatived by a large majority, the dissentients being 292, and the supporters only 35.

The measure was reintroduced by its author in many subsequent sessions, but it was invariably rejected, in many instances by very decisive majorities.











